the weekly Standard

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I believe there are critical questions that should be asked:

Why did a consortium of fat cat hedge funds—including Starwood Capital, TPG Capital, Perry Capital and WLR LeFrak-halt completion of the Concerto residential project in Los Angeles, causing the loss of millions in tax benefits to the City?

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Did Starwood Chairman Barry Sternlicht mean it when he said they will be like the Saudis of the condo market, because their ZERO-interest lets them sit on hundreds of projects for years and ultimately control the market?

Don't billionaires Sternlicht and Wilbur Ross have an obligation to minimize government losses instead of exploiting our system for personal gain? Are they going to sit by while local contractors go bankrupt and workers are forced to draw unemployment checks?

Is this really what the Treasury Department's Public Private Investment Program (P-PIP) was intended to do?

The transcript of Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner's announcement of the program, released March 23, 2009 by the White House Press Office states:

"We need to get this very powerful stimulus program in place as quickly as possible. It will help get millions of Americans back to work."

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Contents

August 2, 2010 • Volume 15, Number 43

5

2 The Scrapbook — *The 'Journolist' Scandal*

5 Casual — *Christopher Caldwell, unmoved by Marilyn*

7 Editorials — *Refudiate Liberalism! • Go for Growth*

Articles

9 As Ohio Goes . . . — BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
Souring on Obama

12 Baked in the Cake — BY PETER WEHNER
Everything you needed to know about Obama was there from the start

14 Last Hired, First Fired? — BY MICHAEL WARREN
The most endangered Democrat from the class of 2008

16 Lone Economic Star — BY ELI LEHRER
What the rest of the country can learn from Texas

18 Onward, Christian Zionists — BY JENNIFER RUBIN
The fastest growing Israel support group in America

20

Features

20 The Unpresidential President — BY JAMES W. CEASER
Obama's rare feat: The longer he holds office, the more he diminishes in stature.

26 Neither Roosevelt nor Reagan — BY NOEMIE EMERY
How Obama blew his opportunity

Books & Arts

30 Fox's Nightowl — BY ANDREW FERGUSON
Greg Gutfeld, subversive

31 Primate Primer — BY MARK TOOLEY
Uneasy lies the head of the Anglican Communion

34 Free to Choose — BY RYAN T. ANDERSON
The 70-30 solution to the new culture war

35 Tragedy at Sea — BY JOSEPH F. CALLO
Military tribunals, 18th-century style

37 Art of Madrid — BY MARK FALCOFF
The lesser-known wonders of the Spanish capital

38 Head Shots — BY JOHN PODHORETZ
A nightmare about real and imaginary dreams

40 Parody — *Lindsay Lohan tells 'In Style' what she can't live without*

38

COVER BY MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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Time for a Shower (Before It's Too Late)

The Scrapbook, like any patriotic American, always enjoys those European Union anecdotes that show up occasionally in the news: You know, the ones about the Italian-born bureaucrat in Brussels who fines a neighborhood butcher in Cornwall for not preparing Cornish hens according to EU specifications. Nothing like that would ever happen in these United States.

Unless, of course, you find yourself in your bathroom, and look around. Over there is the federally mandated toilet which, in compliance with the Energy Policy Act (1992), flushes—or attempts to flush—its meager supply of 1.6 gallons of water. And in the shower, it is possible (although statistically unlikely) that you are one of those lucky Americans who has recently installed a "luxury" shower fixture that features a wide head and multiple nozzles that spray and squirt and otherwise bathe you in a therapeutic avalanche of H_2O.

If so, you might want to consult your lawyer. For the U.S. Department of Energy, in its newfound zeal to persuade citizens to conserve water, is enforcing the provision of the aforementioned Energy Policy and Conservation Act which requires that a showerhead deliver no more than 2.5 gallons of water per minute at a flowing water pressure of 80 pounds per square inch. Got that? Until recently, manufacturers understood "showerhead" to mean a device that showers water onto a bather, and each nozzle was considered to be a separate component in compliance with the 2.5-gallon requirement.

But the Obama Energy Department, and its general counsel, Scott Blake Harris, have decided otherwise, and are levying substantial civil penalties on manufacturers of "luxury" showerheads.

So far, the heavy hand of the DOE has fallen on manufacturers only. But just as it is a violation of federal law for a homeowner to install a 3.5-gallon, pre-Al Gore toilet in the bathroom of his private home, The Scrapbook assumes that the Obama administration will soon require citizens to bathe in compliance with its mandatory showerhead regulations. Or face prosecution. "Did Congress limit consumer choice?" asks Mr. Harris in the *Wall Street Journal*. "Absolutely. When you waste water, you waste energy."

If all of this sounds vaguely ridiculous, that is because it is. The Scrapbook is all in favor of voluntary conservation, and our idea of a luxurious shower is one where the showerhead actually functions properly. But the fact is that the number of Americans who possess "luxury" showerheads is estimated to be somewhere between 1 and 4 percent of the populace—not exactly a tidal wave of environmental arrogance—and a certain number of those are people who benefit from such devices for medical reasons.

It may seem trivial to look askance at government regulations about bathroom fixtures, and a senior bureaucrat who revels in limiting consumer choice. But when federal law governs the way we flush toilets and take a shower—and threatens punishment for defiance—there is good reason to worry about the next particle of freedom on the progressive hit list. ♦

The 'Journolist' Scandal

Forgive us if we indulge in a little shop talk this week. The Scrapbook is well aware that journalists sometimes overestimate the degree to which the public is interested in our professional gossip. So we don't blame you if you have tuned out the "Journolist" story that has been all the buzz among Washington scribes—preoccupying them as only stories that feature bloggers talking about how other bloggers talk about bloggers can do. Still, we think there are items of larger interest amid the backbiting.

CORBIS

Ezra Klein

Journolist, until it was recently shut down by its founder, Ezra Klein of the *Washington Post*, was an invitation-only group of 400 or so liberal and left-wing writers, bloggers, reporters, think-tankers, academics, and assorted hangers-on. They traded emails with one another—political chat, professional gossip, sports gab—and promised as a condition of membership to keep their discussions private.

Klein shut down the list last month after leaks from it caused one of his *Washington Post* colleagues to lose his job. The surprising thing, really, was

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not the leaks—this is a group of journalists, in the main, people who purvey leaked information for a living—but that they took so long to occur. Journolist members had been chattering away for three years and the law of *omertà* had mostly been upheld.

No longer. Tucker Carlson's new online publication *Daily Caller* is apparently in possession of most or all of the group's archived discussions and began parceling them out last week. The headlines give the broad outline:

"Documents show media plotting to kill stories about Rev. Jeremiah Wright"

"Liberal journalists suggest government shut down Fox News"

"Journolist's anti-Palin crusade of 2008"

"Journolisters offended by Keith Olbermann's 'misogynistic,' 'predictable,' and 'pompous' show"

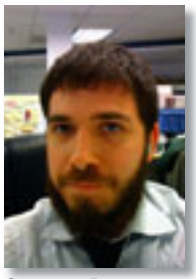
That last headline—if you are familiar with the bombastic MSNBC host—may surprise you at first glance. Olbermann, like the Journolisters, is a partisan lefty through and through. The news here, however, is that in private his ideological allies agree with the 299,992,000 Americans who somehow manage on a daily basis not to watch his show: Olbermann is an unbearable blowhard. The question the Journolisters discussed among themselves was whether Olbermann was too useful to the cause to be criticized in public. (We won't keep you in suspense; their answer was yes.)

For the most part, though, the published Journolist emails seem to be a case study in support of Henry Adams's famous observation that politics has "always been the systematic organization of hatreds."

*When Rush Limbaugh was hospitalized with heart pains, Sarah Spitz, a producer for an NPR-affiliated radio station in Los Angeles, wrote to her fellow Journolisters that if she saw the popular conservative talker having a heart attack, she would "Laugh loudly like a maniac and watch his eyes bug out."

*Ryan Donmoyer, a reporter at Bloomberg News, compared the Tea Party movement to the rise of the Nazis: "Is anyone starting to see parallels here between the teabaggers and their tactics and the rise of the Brownshirts? . . . Esp. Now that it's getting violent? Reminds me of the Beer Hall fracases of the 1920s."

*Spencer Ackerman, a reporter for Wired.com who previously worked for the *New Republic*, urged his colleagues to level false accusations of racism against conservatives. This, he thought, would be a good way to limit the damage being done to candidate Obama by revelations that his pastor of 20 years, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, was himself a raving race-baiter and America-hater. Wrote Ackerman:


Spencer Ackerman

It's not necessary to jump to Wright-qua-Wright's defense. What is necessary is to raise the cost on the right of going after the left. In other words, find a rightwinger's [sic] and smash it through a plate-glass window. Take a snapshot of the bleeding mess and send it out in a Christmas card to let the right know that it needs to live in a state of constant fear. Obviously I mean this rhetorically. . . .

If the right forces us all to either defend Wright or tear him down, no matter what we choose, we lose the game they've put upon us. Instead, take one of them—Fred Barnes, Karl Rove, who cares—and call them racists. Ask: why do they have such a deep-seated problem with a black politician who unites the country? What lurks behind those problems? This makes *them* sputter with rage, which in turn leads to overreaction and self-destruction.

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As it happens, our colleague Fred Barnes and Karl Rove shared a laugh over this slur, as Barnes related in an excellent July 22 column for the *Wall Street Journal*, "The Vast Left-Wing Media Conspiracy." But that doesn't make Ackerman's suggestion—which went unrebuked by his fellow Journolisters—any less reprehensible. He is, to use the word in its strict sense, shameless.

Is there a moral to this story? Only the same one that our grandparents knew in their bones, that journalism has more than its share of reprobates in its ranks, many of them not as intelligent or witty as they think they are, and too many of them dishonest partisan hacks. Oh, and the next time you hear a liberal complain about "incivility" on the right, or call for "raising the tone" of our political discourse, you're forgiven if you laugh out loud.

Postscript: Gallup last week released its annual survey of Americans' "confidence in institutions." The headline finding was Congress's last place ranking, with only 11 percent having a great deal or "quite a lot" of confidence in it. The comparable figures for newspapers and television news were 25 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Oddly enough, The Scrapbook hasn't yet seen these figures widely reported, either on television or in the newspapers. ♦

The American Entrepreneur Lives!

"Homeless Man Breaks into Shuttered California Bar, Starts Selling Drinks" (FoxNews.com headline, July 21, 2010). ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"It had been, Sen. John Sparkman of Alabama said, a 'rocky road.' The year was 1968—one of those years that ranks with A.D. 33, 1066, and 1776 as an inarguable landmark . . . " (*Newsweek*, Jon Meacham, July 16). ♦

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Not the Marilyn Kind

"Decaying industrial cities" are no longer a blot on the American landscape. What we have now is decayed industrial cities. From a certain vantage point—the consumerist one—the empty shells of these places are more pleasant than the actual, living cities were. Factories, tanneries, and high schools have been refitted to serve the people who survived them, whether as malls or as assisted-living facilities. The firehouse is now the Firehouse Pub. Stan's Muffler Shop has become Melissa's Muffin Shop. It is not urban planning so much as taxidermy.

I am writing this in an exceptionally pleasant place in such a city—a coffee shop with high-speed Internet. The people who run it are Albanians. How the place is decorated probably has a lot to do with when it opened: in the years just after September 11, 2001, when the distrust of newcomers that is usual in blighted cities was running high. What Americans know about Albania is easily summed up, and some of it may even be true: It's full of Muslims. It once had a king named Zog who was 7 feet tall and sailed away with its national treasury. Bill Clinton bombed Serbia to smithereens in order to enlarge it. Its economy is dominated by what you might call, if you were being polite, an impressive stolen-car sector.

Aside from a couple of photos of the owners' native village, this place is a shrine to American culture. There are photographs of American haystacks, American country lanes, and the New York skyline. There is one of those "old-fashioned" pressed-tin ceilings that materialized simultaneously in every yuppie eatery in the country around 1998. The Weather Channel plays all day long on a flat-screen TV. This is immigrant assimilation of the more-Catholic-than-the-pope variety. If a native doesn't feel comfortable here, there is something wrong with him.

And that is why the gigantic black-and-white photograph of Marilyn Monroe in modest autumn dress leaves me ill at ease, as photographs of Marilyn Monroe always do. If she is the great American sex symbol, then there is something I am missing

DARREN GYGI

about either sex or (preferably) America. Really, this is not contrarianism—from almost four centuries' distance, I can see quite clearly what Charles II saw in Nell Gwynne, and from two I can see the Maja through Goya's eyes. But Marilyn Monroe?

The message that that big black-and-white poster in the Albanian coffee shop intends to convey is: "Her matchless beauty haunted the dreams of passionate men, and goaded them to scale the summits of poetic eloquence." But the message it conveys to me is something more like: "Her tuna-noodle casserole is always a hit at the PTA potluck." Or maybe: "She has a kind word for everyone who walks into the hardware store."

Over the years, I have confided to a few friends this terrible secret: The feelings Marilyn Monroe arouses in me *can* be printed in a family magazine. To my relief, I find I am not alone. At the end of the day, she is a bit like Marmite: Either you love it or you miss the whole point of it. The question is how she came to be considered the cynosure on which all American libidos converged.

Since those inclined to make a big cultural deal of Marilyn Monroe have tended to be either (like Norman Mailer) pretentious or (like Andy Warhol) frivolous, one suspects a cultural fraud. Many of the values that dominated life in the period from 1914 to 1989 proved to be not waves of the future but ephemeral delusions: Communism in politics, Modernism in the arts, Freudianism in social relations. What makes us so sure the culture's conception of sex appeal was not similarly misdirected?

But there is a second possibility: that her appeal, while genuine, was never so much sexual as social. In a sexist age, masculine power of various kinds swirled around her. She became iconic because Arthur Miller, Joe DiMaggio, and the Kennedys saw her as iconic. How come? It is probably not an accident that all of those men were of recent immigrant stock. The Sicily that Joe DiMaggio's parents fled produced great things, but not Marilyn Monroes. Back then she was a symbol *of* America, not *for* America. We shouldn't expect her to reflect the average American's idea of sex any more than Maurice Chevalier reflects the average Frenchman's idea of culture. The prize she represented was not sex but belonging. The wall of an immigrant-run café in a changing American city in the Internet age is probably the most natural place on earth for her to be.

Christopher Caldwell

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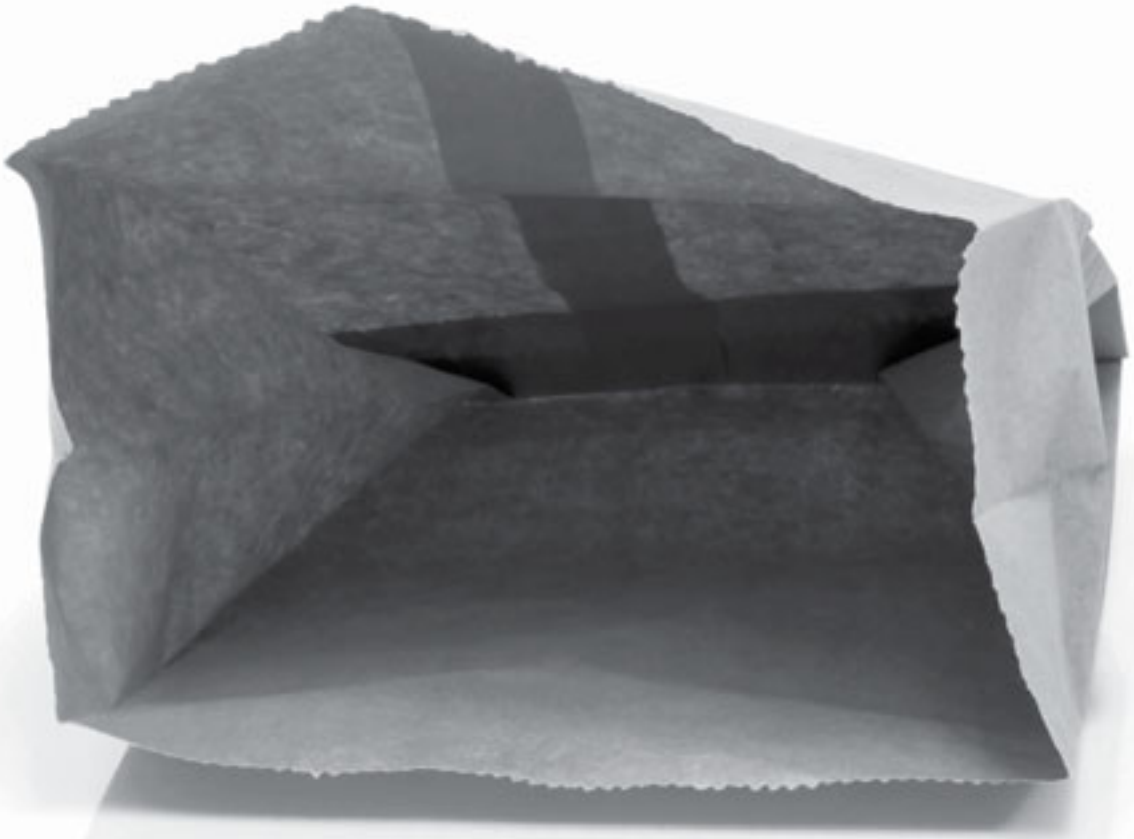

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Refudiate Liberalism!

Just before noon on Sunday, July 18, 2010, Sarah Palin enriched the English language. Referring to the planned Islamic center near the 9/11 site in New York, she tweeted: "Ground Zero Mosque supporters: doesn't it stab you in the heart, as it does ours throughout the heartland? Peaceful Muslims, pls refudiate."

Presumably, Palin was wavering between "refute" and "repudiate," and, in the heat of the tweeting moment, typed or BlackBerried or iPhoned or texted the new amalgam, "refudiate." Pedants in the blogosphere got all huffy. Palin decided to double down. A few hours later, she follow-up-tweeted: "English is a living language. Shakespeare liked to coin new words too. Got to celebrate it!"

Shakespalin!

Gotcha.

So let us celebrate the new term "refudiate."

Not that there's anything wrong with "refute." It means, according to Webster's Third, "to overthrow by argument, evidence, or proof; prove to be false or erroneous." Nor is there anything wrong with "repudiate," meaning "to cast off . . . to refuse to accept as having rightful authority . . . to refuse approval or belief to." And they're distinct. To refute is primarily an intellectual act; a thinker refutes a claim or an argument. To repudiate is a practical or political act; a political party repudiates a sect that holds a discredited (and perhaps refuted) argument. A refutation that isn't followed by a repudiation is just talk. A repudiation that doesn't include a refutation is just arbitrary action.

The case for linguistic innovation is this: We need a word that captures and conjoins the meanings of refutation and repudiation. And we need it now. To save the country from the ravages of contemporary liberalism, we have to refute liberal arguments *and* see liberal politicians repudiated at the polls.

So the conservative agenda is, in a word, refudiation. Indeed, given the dramatic moment at which we have arrived, one might say that we now have the prospect of a grand refudiation of liberalism.

The meeting of intellectual refutation and political repudiation is, after all, the usual prerequisite for the establishment of a new political order. The Tea Partiers—the most striking political development of our day—have understood this well. The movement is an assemblage of arguers and activists. Indeed, they might be called refudiators *avant la lettre*.

The original Tea Party was followed, of course, by the Declaration of Independence, which proclaims certain truths—that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. These truths are based on a rejection of other claims to rule, monarchical and aristocratic claims—a refutation of them based on "the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born, with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of god" (in Jefferson's famous words). And the proclamation of irrefutable truths is combined with the assertion of a particular act—that the American people repudiate "all allegiance to the British crown" and "political connection" with Great Britain.

The Declaration of Independence—and the successful struggle for freedom that followed—depended, then, on a grand refudiation of the existing arrangements under which America labored. The Constitution similarly depended on a refudiation of the Articles of Confederation. It required both an argument as to why they were failing and action to replace them. Each of our big, realigning elections—in 1860, 1896, 1932, 1980—reflected a refudiation of the political status quo. Politics is both argument and action. Realignment depends on refudiation.

We are conservatives. We ordinarily shun novelties of all kinds, including new words. But desperate times call for desperate measures. The Obama project is one of noxious ideology and wild political overreach. The challenge before conservatives is to beat back both. So say it loud and say it proud: Refudiate liberalism now!

—*William Kristol*

Go for Growth

If Republicans were James Bond villains, this would be the moment in the movie when they chuckle and say deviously, "Everything is going according to plan." The president's approval rating continues to fall. Last week Gallup found that Congress is the least popular institution in the land. The GOP maintains a slight lead in the con-

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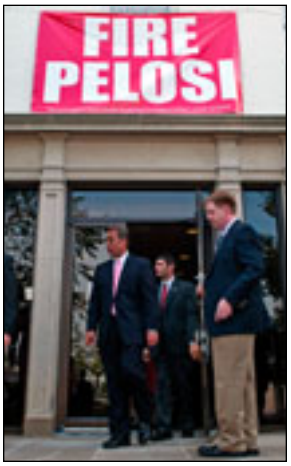
gressional generic ballot, a metric in which the Republicans typically underperform. What was recently unthinkable—that the GOP could take one or both houses of Congress this November—is a real possibility.

If only Republicans knew what to do when (and if) they return to power.

True, there are some conservatives and Republicans who believe an agenda isn't necessary. Let the Democrats fall under their own weight, they say. Then we can clean up the mess. Alternative policies, in their view, would only give liberals and Democrats something to demagogue in the campaign. Better to remain cautious. Better to wait until the storm is over.

They're wrong. Not only is such a strategy timid, it is also a false reading of the last two years in American politics. After all, the Democrats are a case study in the perils of victory by default. It was not a strong alternative agenda that netted the Democrats 55 House seats and 16 Senate seats between 2006 and 2008. The party made those gains by vigorously opposing an unpopular war, an unpopular president, a corrupt Republican majority, and an economy in recession. The Democrats won by being the other guy. (A little luck, in the form of razor-thin Senate victories in Montana and Virginia in 2006 and Minnesota in 2008, and Arlen Specter's defection in 2009, helped too.) Nor did Obama run on bailouts, a trillion-dollar stimulus, and a health insurance mandate. He ran on an airy promise to bring the country together and govern differently from George W. Bush.



John Boehner leaving RNC headquarters, July 20

Look where that has brought him and his party. A lack of new ideas and victory through opposition may have provided the Democrats with tactical victories. But every day those victories look more and more Pyrrhic—indeed, they may have opened the door for Republican strategic victory in 2010 and 2012 and beyond. Yes, the Democratic majority emerged. But it isn't durable. Liberalism is exhausted.

Liberals and Democrats write all this off, of course. The reason President Obama is unpopular, they argue, isn't that his agenda is too liberal for public consumption. It's that the economy continues to be in the doldrums. That's true as far as it goes. But it doesn't go very far.

Obama's agenda has hurt him. It is hard to think of an era in which the political majority pushed so many unpopular initiatives in such a short span of time. From the stimulus to the mandate to cap and trade to flirting with a trial for Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in civilian court to suing Arizona for enforcing federal immigration law, it's almost as if this administration enjoys being on the wrong side of public opinion. Can liberals honestly believe that these policies would be more popular if America were at full employment?

The reason the economy hurts Obama is that his agenda has not produced a recovery. At best, the legislation he has signed into law has delayed the financial reckoning. At worst, it has actively hindered recovery by increasing the regulatory and tax burdens on business and crowding out private investment. And so a principled and cheerful opposition to the Obama-Pelosi-Reid legislation, and a promise to overturn that legislation's worst elements, is the beginning of a Republican agenda. But just the beginning.

Luckily, the GOP still has some idea men in its ranks. The Republican Study Committee (RSC), led by Representative Tom Price of Georgia, has designed an alternative budget resolution. And Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin has designed a long-term Roadmap for America's Future. Both plans limit government and encourage growth. Ryan's plan is especially audacious, as it overhauls the welfare state in a market-oriented, conservative direction. The really remarkable thing, however, is that these are the only two Republican visions of the future at this time of political and economic ferment. Why aren't there more?

An enterprising conservative would build on the RSC and Ryan plans with an explicitly pro-growth agenda. He (or she!) would do this with the understanding that only robust, broad-based, and prolonged economic growth will produce jobs, reduce the debt burden, and increase social cohesion. He (or she) would be aware of a recent study by the Kauffman Foundation that found that net job growth in the United States comes from firms less than one year old. This enterprising conservative's growth agenda, therefore, would make it a point to reduce hindrances to entrepreneurship and small business.

Meaning? An extension of current tax rates on income, dividends, and capital gains until the economy is booming and Congress is ready to undertake large-scale, pro-family, pro-investment tax reform. A payroll tax cut. A promise to take the Federal Register to the paper shredder, reducing the number of regulations that aspiring businessmen face when they start new ventures. A plan to withdraw from GM and Fannie and Freddie and end corporate welfare. A commitment to advance free trade by passing stalled agreements with South Korea and Colombia and championing new agreements with India and Africa.

The benefits associated with this agenda would not only be economic. The public would know where conservatives and Republicans stand. They would know what to expect in the years to come. And they would be able to hold the GOP accountable. The alternative is for Republicans to stand pat, benefit in the short term from Obama's unpopularity in 2010—and reap the whirlwind in 2012.

—Matthew Continetti

NEWSCOM

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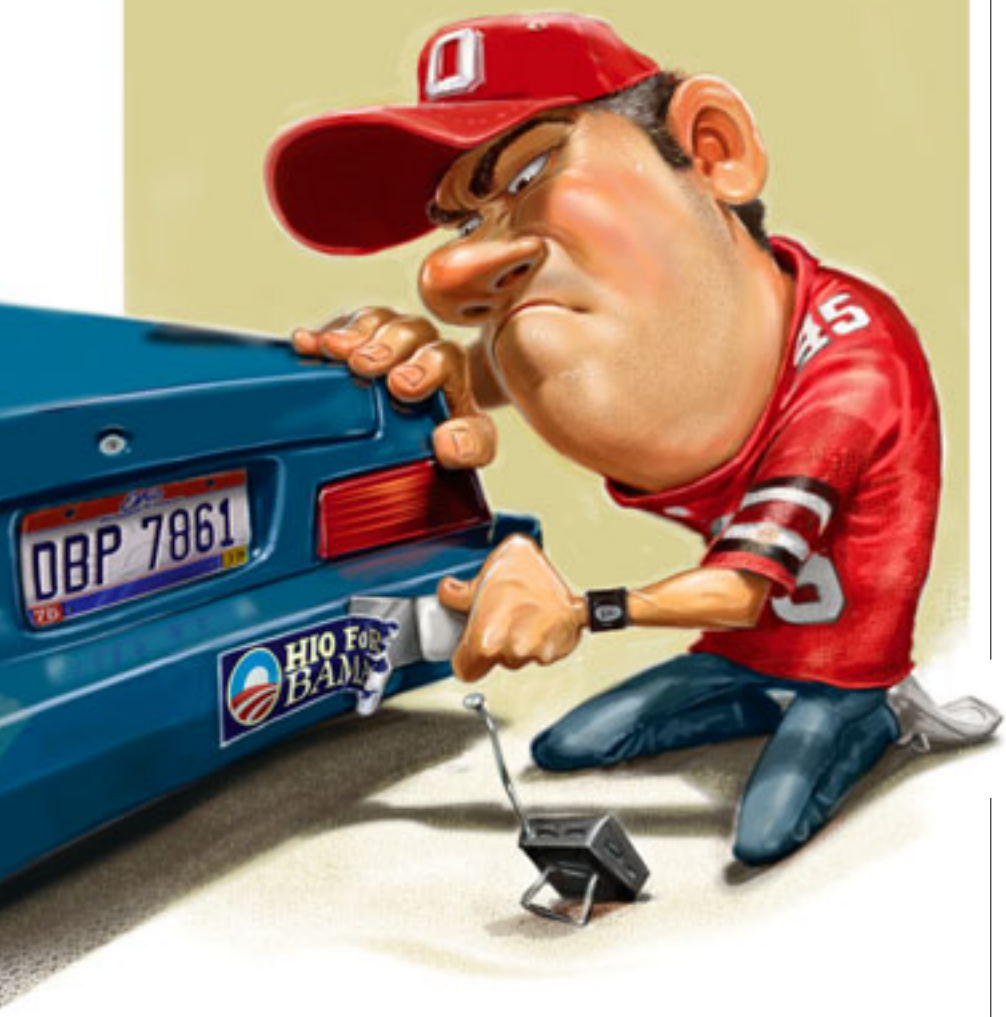
As Ohio Goes . . .

Souring on Obama.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES



GARY LOCKE

Holland, Ohio

Early in the afternoon of a warm, midsummer Saturday, Norman Roundell sat in a lawn chair in his front yard. He sipped from a coffee mug half-full of Old Milwaukee, with a second unopened can at his feet, next to his pack of Pyramid cigarettes. His wife, Nora, sat 20 feet away on a small deck attached to their modest rambler.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Their topic of discussion: Barack Obama and the economy.

"He can't do it all in one day," said Nora. "It's just like a clock going around—better to worse, worse to better. It's going to get worse first. No one is hiring . . ."

Her husband cut her off.

"At least he's trying something different!" he bellowed, as if he were disagreeing with her. "He's doing the best he can! What the hell can he do?" "Shit," Norman shook his head in exasperation. Then he shouted. "He inherited all that bullshit!"

His wife agreed. "I do believe he inherited it," she volunteered. "I don't think he caused any of it."

Norman, shouted again: "He inherited all that bullshit!"

And there, without the help of highly paid consultants or elaborate focus groups, is the Democrats' main talking point heading into the 2010 midterm elections.

The following day, senior White House political adviser David Axelrod made much the same argument without the admirable efficiency. "What we don't want to do is go back to the same policies that created the disaster in the first place. And this is really what the debate is about."

Obama made the case himself at a town hall in Racine, Wisconsin, on June 30.

> We had to take some tough steps to pull the country out of the freefall we faced when I took office. Back then, the economy was shrinking faster than it had in decades. Today, it's growing again. Back then, we were losing an average of 750,000 jobs a month. Today, we've added private sector jobs for five months in a row.

The president also lashed out at Republicans.

> But to be fair, the other party's opposition has also been rooted in their sincere beliefs about how the economy works. . . . They think we should keep on doing what they did for most of the last decade, leading up to the recession. Their prescription for every challenge is pretty much the same: cut taxes for the wealthy, cut rules for corporations, and cut working folks loose to fend for themselves.

Translation: I inherited all this bullshit. It's a long way from the soaring "hope and change" themes of his presidential campaign.

Three weeks before the 2008 election, Barack Obama spent three days here in Lucas County, Ohio, preparing for the final presidential debate. Few states matter more than Ohio and the Toledo media market, which bleeds into southern Michi-

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gan, gives candidates exposure to battleground voters in two states for relatively little cost. Staying in suburban Toledo for his debate prep, making occasional campaign stops in the area, and working out at the local YMCA, Obama ensured his campaign received an abundance of "free media"—local news coverage—to supplement its ad buys.

The centerpiece of Obama's Toledo stay was a policy speech on the economy. The U.S. economy, he said, was in crisis, suffering

> an immediate economic emergency that requires urgent action. . . . We need to pass an economic rescue plan for the middle-class and we need to do it now. Today, I'm proposing a number of steps that we should take immediately to stabilize our financial system, provide relief to families and communities, and help struggling homeowners. It's a plan that begins with one word that's on everyone's mind, and it's spelled J-O-B-S.

Obama laid out a series of proposals, many of which would form the heart of his so-called "stimulus" package. He promised to give "95 percent of workers and their families" a tax cut. He would provide money to states and local communities with budget shortfalls to allow them to continue infrastructure projects. He would "extend and expand" unemployment benefits. He would give tax credits for mortgage payments. He also said that he could reduce the costs of health care with comprehensive reform and change the way Wall Street operates by overhauling financial regulation.

He warned of tough times without action: "We've already lost three-quarters of a million jobs this year, and some experts say that unemployment may rise to 8 percent by the end of next year. We can't wait until then to start creating new jobs." And he made promises that were audacious even by the standards of presidential campaign rhetoric.

> We'll create five million new, high-wage jobs by investing in the renewable sources of energy that will eliminate the oil we currently import from the Middle East in ten years, and we'll create two million jobs by rebuilding our crumbling roads, schools, and bridges.

Remaking the economy, Obama declared, "is why I'm running for president of the United States of America." And it was largely why the voters elected him three weeks later. With both houses of Congress solidly controlled by Democrats, President Obama and his party had no problem passing the $787 billion "American Reinvestment and Recovery Act"—the stimulus.

It hasn't worked.

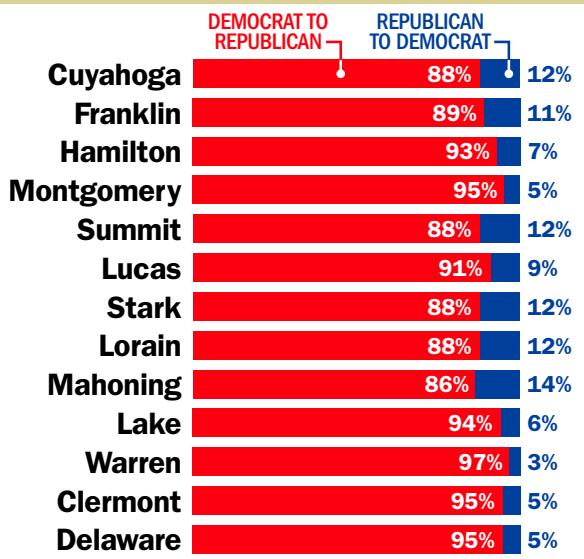
Since President Obama signed the stimulus bill on February 17, 2009, the economy has shed an additional 2.35 million jobs. The stimulus is a failure even by the White House's own standards. Christina Romer, President Obama's top economic adviser, said that the stimulus would keep unemployment under 8 percent. Unemployment was 6.6 percent in October 2008, when Obama gave his speech, and 7.7 percent when he took office. After 18 months of "emergency" spending designed to jump-start the economy, it's now 9.5 percent, and many economists believe it will return to double-digits when discouraged workers not currently looking for work once again start seeking employment. The White House projected that with stimulus spending unemployment right now would be just 7.5 percent.

Although the White House is working hard to convince the country that the stimulus has "saved or created" jobs, voters aren't buying. A CBS/*New York Times* poll in mid-July found that a majority of Americans (74 percent) believe that the stimulus has had no effect on the economy (56 percent) or worsened it (18 percent). Fifty-four percent of those surveyed disapprove of Obama's handling of the economy and just 40 percent approve. Most telling, perhaps, is Obama's overall approval rating. It was 62 percent in February 2009, with only 25 percent disapproval. Today, just 46 percent of Americans approve of his performance and 46 percent disapprove.

In Lucas County, these abstract numbers come to life. Obama beat John McCain here 65-34. But the May 2010 primaries demonstrated a shift in Democratic fortunes. Ohio voters who want to vote in party primaries have to declare an affiliation. (Voters also have the option of choosing an "issues only" ballot. Those who do so do not have to pick a party.) On primary day this spring, May 4, Republicans had a 10-to-1 advantage in crossovers. Some 392 voters switched their registration from Republican to Democrat, but 3,743 switched their registration from Democrat to Republican. This, despite the fact that the only competitive primary in Ohio this spring was for the Democratic nomination for Senate.

One-Way Traffic

May 4 Primary Voters Switching Party Registration in Ohio's 13 Most Populous Counties



SOURCE: Ohio Secretary of State

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(Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher defeated Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner by 10 points and will face former Republican representative Rob Portman this fall.)

Republicans also had a strong advantage in voters who switched from "issues only" ballots in 2008 to a party ballot in 2010. Some 251 "issues only" voters chose Democratic ballots this year and 699 opted to align with Republicans—again, in a county that went for Obama almost 2-1.

Mark Wagoner, a Republican state senator whose district covers half of Lucas County, says that Obama has been too aggressive for many voters in northwest Ohio. "It wasn't that the voters bought into Obama's vision," he explains over chili dogs at Tony Packo's in Toledo. "They were just sick of Republicans. I went door-to-door [in 2008] and had a number of people tell me they would not vote for a single Republican." Now, he says, many of the same voters have "buyer's remorse." "They tell me: 'This isn't the change I voted for.'"

It's not just Lucas County. In Cuyahoga County, which surrounds Cleveland, 12,756 voters switched from Democrat to Republican and just 1,796 went from Republican to Democrat. In Franklin County (Columbus), Republicans added 7,622 from Democrats and lost just 917. In Hamilton County (Cincinnati), 5,713 switched from Democrat to Republican and just 411 from Republican to Democrat.

Kevin DeWine, chairman of the Ohio Republican party, believes that Republicans have picked up 100,000 crossover voters statewide this year, with 1.8 million primary votes cast. Contrast that to 2008, when Democrats picked up 96,000 crossovers with 3.6 million votes cast. (Some of those crossovers can be explained by Rush Limbaugh's encouraging Republicans to switch parties in 2008 to vote for Hillary Clinton in the Democratic presidential primary and so prolong her battle with Obama. They likely would've switched back this year. But as was the case in Lucas County, unaffiliated and issue-only voters are also trending strongly Republican.)

Late last week, Obama gave an interview to NBC White House correspondent Chuck Todd. The midterm elections, Obama said, will represent "a choice between the policies that got us into this mess and my policies that got us out of this mess."

Unemployment is at 9.5 percent. Deficits and spending are at record levels. Economic uncertainty is widespread. And voters are rejecting the argument that Obama's policies "got us out of this mess."

Leo Rose, who lives in Holland, where Obama went house-to-house seeking votes during his visit to Lucas County back in 2008, is concerned. "I'm not happy with what he's done so far," Rose says. He doesn't believe that the economy is recovering.

And, more worrisome for the White House and Democrats, he says: "I'm not sure Obama has the wisdom to get us out of this." ♦

Creating Jobs for America: Part 2

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

When it comes to creating jobs, America is going in the wrong direction—more taxes, more regulations, and greater economic uncertainty. It's time for a new, pro-growth direction.

Here are our recommendations for robust job creation and economic growth:

First, Washington must address America's uncompetitive tax rates. This Congress has already raised taxes by almost $700 billion to pay for health care, stimulus, and other programs. Proposals in the capital markets, energy, and climate change arenas would raise hundreds of billions more. And beginning next year, Americans will be hit with the largest tax increase in history.

Our weak economy simply cannot sustain such massive tax hikes. We therefore urge Congress and the administration to immediately support at least a temporary extension of all the tax relief passed in the prior decade.

Spending is also going through the roof and deficits right along with it. Instead of expanding entitlements, policymakers should control and modernize them without further delay. Sustained economic growth can help bring down the deficit, but we will also need to generate additional revenues. Government should raise these funds without undermining economic growth or competitiveness, for example, by selling $1.7 trillion worth of oil, gas, and shale leases.

The president has also said that millions of American jobs can be created by doubling U.S. exports in five years, and we agree. We can start by immediately passing three pending free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea and reviving global trade talks known as the Doha Round.

Millions of jobs, as well as our quality of life, depend on modernizing all forms of American infrastructure. We must remove the regulatory, legal, and financial roadblocks to private investment. Doing so would unleash up to $180 billion and create more than 1.5 million jobs in the next decade in water infrastructure alone. Incentives and legal surety for investments in energy projects would also create hundreds of thousands of jobs, as would a multiyear, federal surface transportation bill.

Finally, as I discussed in my last column, the avalanche of new regulations is precisely the wrong prescription for our economy. Instead of strangling the private sector with burdensome regulations, we must enable it to nimbly respond to changing market conditions.

The business community wants to help our economy and our country succeed. The surest way for this to happen is for government to create the right conditions for economic recovery. We don't want to wait until after the November elections. We're ready to start today, and we don't care who gets the credit.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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Barack Obama reasons with Joe 'the plumber' Wurzelbacher in Holland, Ohio.

AP / JAE C. HONG

Baked in the Cake

Everything you needed to know about Obama could have been learned from his campaign.

BY PETER WEHNER

During the 2008 campaign, it was clear that Barack Obama would govern as a liberal on several important issues. But it seemed possible that, at least in other areas, he might govern as what he insisted he was: something of a centrist, pragmatic and reasonable, non-ideological and relatively bipartisan.

It was not to be. And it turns out that there were several moments in the campaign that revealed what an Obama presidency would be like. They were not the result of grand policy pronouncements or statements made in major speeches. Rather, they were more often than not words spoken off-the-cuff, in a more informal setting, and in several instances they were not meant to be made public. But they were; and they provided an insight into Obama's core beliefs, a sneak preview of coming attractions.

Here are three such moments.

■ 'I think when you spread the wealth around it's good for everybody.'

Obama said those words to Joe Wurzelbacher in an unscripted exchange in Ohio on October 14, 2008. They opened a window into Obama's view of the role of government and his conception of social justice. He seems to be inclined toward equality of results, not just equality of opportunity—and he sees government as the instrument to bring that about.

Like many modern-day liberals, Obama seems to resent wealthy people—or at least those wealthy people who don't support him or who earned their wealth through enterprises other than, say, multimillion dollar movie deals. Taxing the well-to-do is not simply an economic policy; Obama views it as a moral good, a social virtue, a noble sacrifice. The role of the state is to reduce inequality even if it comes at the expense of growth and prosperity.

The president and his administration's unyielding attacks on the "rich," on CEOs, corporations, and wealth creation, are therefore predictable and inevitable. They are a manifestation of his economic and social views. Although it was late in coming around, the Chamber of Commerce has finally realized that Obama's policies constitute a "general attack on our free enterprise system."

■ 'For the first time in my adult life, I am proud of my country.'

These words were uttered not by Barack Obama but by his wife Michelle in a campaign appearance in Milwaukee on February 18, 2008, in support of her husband's presidential bid. It's reasonable to conclude, however, that this statement represented both of their worldviews.

We have seen their attitude toward America play out in different ways, most especially in Obama's worldwide apology tour, where he criticized America for actions past and present, for reasons real and imagined. He has criticized America on everything from committing "torture" to dragging our feet on global warming, from our selective promotion of democracy to unilateralism, from disrespecting Europe to showing lack of respect to the Muslim world. Even the attacks on September 11, 2001, count against America. According to Obama, they "led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust."

The belief that America is run-of-the-mill is also reflected in Obama's April 2009 statement in France when he was asked if he believed in American exceptionalism. "I believe in American exceptionalism," Obama said, "just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and

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the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." That is a skillful politician's way of saying he doesn't believe in American exceptionalism.

When the Iranian regime was crushing the freedom movement, Obama explained his reluctance to "meddle" in the affairs of Iran because of what America did there more than a half-century ago. And so it is no surprise to find a critical view of America reflected in the words of Obama diplomatic aides such as Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner who, when asked if he brought up the Arizona immigration law in his discussions with the Chinese, said, "We brought it up early and often. It was mentioned in the first session, and as a troubling trend in our society and an indication that we have to deal with issues of discrimination or potential discrimination, and that these are issues very much being debated in our own society."

What's more, Obama constantly places himself above his country; the text and subtext of his remarks send an unmistakable message: President Obama understands the grievances other nations (including our sworn enemies) have against America, and he's acting as swiftly as he can to move us from darkness into light. If we "occasionally confess to having strayed from our values and our ideals," Obama has said, "that strengthens our hand." But the president's more-than-occasional confessions are why dictators such as Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez have applauded Obama's portrayal of America.

■ **'It's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.'**

Obama made this off-the-record comment about people in small towns in Pennsylvania and the Midwest to a group of wealthy donors in San Francisco on April 6, 2008. What we learned is that Obama is an elitist. He feels superior to and sorry for the unenlightened masses. And sometimes, when they oppose his policies, he and his top aides get downright nasty.

Consider the White House and Democratic reaction to the town hall meetings in the summer of 2009, when Americans registered their strong opposition to Obamacare. These citizens were described as "angry mobs," as Nazis and clones of Timothy McVeigh, who employed "un-American" tactics. White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel said the contrast between Obama—whom Emanuel described as "reasoned, calm, looking like an adult in the room"—and the protesters would work to the administration's advantage. "I think the public looks at screaming, swastikas, attacks. . . . It's not a persuasive argument," Emanuel said. "If anything, it is the opposite."

Our elite campuses left a deep imprint on Obama. It is not surprising that he is drawn to a negative narrative of America's history; that he has an instinctive antipathy toward business and the free market; and that he is emotionally distant, and even contemptuous of, small-town Americans.

Then, in August 2009, a *USA Today* poll showed that the town hall meeting made Americans more, not less, sympathetic to the protesters' views—with the margin a staggering 2-to-1 among independents. In response White House adviser David Axelrod questioned the survey's methodology.

Obama's comments in San Francisco also revealed a man who views small town Americans as somewhat crude and bigoted, harboring racist sentiments. When things don't go well for them, they turn on "people who aren't like them." Obama's party has displayed this attitude in responding to the Tea Party movement, which it has repeatedly attempted to link to racism.

The view from Obama and his team seems to be that no rational person could possibly oppose his policies; they are self-evidently and by definition right and wise. And so there must be some other explanation for what is happening—ignorance, foolishness, partisanship, bigotry, or some combination of these. Obama clearly believed it was his job, if he became president, to lead people out of their benighted state to broad, enlightened uplands.

Doubtless many factors have contributed to shaping the Obama outlook. But if there is one thing above any others that explains it, it is that he is a product of the academy—in his case Columbia University, Harvard Law School, and the University of Chicago.

It is hardly a secret that the ethos of modern universities is hostile toward America and in favor of redistributing wealth and centralizing power. The academy is inhabited by people of considerable, if insecure, arrogance. They are often closed to alternative points of view. The predominant view among academics is that we should transcend country, nationality, and religion. They tend to be contemptuous of mainstream American values and of the general public.

By academic standards, Barack Obama is mild in his views. He is no Ward Churchill or William Ayers. No successful national politician could be. Still, Obama's years on elite campuses left a deep imprint on him. They helped shape his attitudes, his mindset, and his presuppositions. And so it is not surprising that Obama is drawn to a negative narrative of America's history and its role in the world; that he has an instinctive antipathy toward business and the free market; and that he is emotionally distant from, and in his unguarded moments somewhat contemptuous of, small-town Americans—the kind of folk who cling to their guns and their Bibles in times of distress.

The warning signs were all there. ♦

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Tom Perriello at a town hall meeting in Fork Union, Virginia, August 2009

AP / STEVE HELBER

Last Hired, First Fired?

The most endangered Democrat from the class of 2008. BY MICHAEL WARREN

Fork Union, Virginia

In Virginia's Fifth Congressional District, freshman incumbent Tom Perriello won his seat by the slimmest margin of any Democrat in 2008. If Republicans do well in the elections in November, this seat will almost certainly be one they win.

Perriello's challenger, state senator Robert Hurt, knows this better than anyone. "The Fifth District is one of those races that if [the Republicans] can't win, we're going to have a real hard time replacing the speaker, Nancy Pelosi," he says. He refers to Perriello as the "poster child for Nancy Pelosi's policies."

With a few exceptions early in his term, Perriello has been a reliable supporter of the Democrats' legislative agenda. He voted for the health care reform bill, cap and trade, and the stimulus. He calls his vote for the stimulus bill a "no-brainer."

"Because the Republicans insisted on taking the job-creation parts out of [the stimulus], we've been able to prevent a depression but not yet have a recovery," Perriello says, as we approach a dollar store in Fork Union. The congressman is on a "Main Street tour" to see how businesses are coping in tough economic times. I press him about the high unemployment rates President Obama said the country would avoid if the stimulus became law. "If the Republicans had put patriotism ahead of power we would have gotten a better stimulus," he says. "Instead, we got what we got."

'He voted for the stimulus, and we didn't want it. You can't ignore the people you represent.'

Perriello, 35, has a youthful energy that benefited him in his first campaign and has earned him the moniker "the hardest working man in Congress." "If he's had a day off, I haven't noticed it," says Larry J. Sabato of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Perriello's birthplace and the district's population center.

Perriello acts the part, wearing a plaid oxford shirt with no tie and the sleeves rolled up, Obama-style. Hands on his hips, he listens to constituents with a detached, academic look. There are no hand-to-shoulder, "I feel your pain" moments as he speaks with unemployed constituents and struggling small business owners. Perriello is unemotional and serious, and even those who disagree with him say he is genuine.

"He's a good guy," says Barbara Tocci, a sales associate for James River Real Estate in nearby Scottsville. "I think he's sincere." Tocci displays the Gadsden flag, a Tea Party favorite, outside her office and was active at local town hall meetings in the last year. But "he voted for the stimulus, and we didn't want it," she says. "You can't ignore the people you represent."

Hurt, who comes from the small town of Chatham southwest of Charlottesville, says Perriello ignored his constituents on the health care bill, too. "The people of the Fifth District made it clear in the town halls that Perriello attended," Hurt says. "They did not want any part of [the health care bill]."

"He voted with Nancy Pelosi and not with the people," Hurt adds.

Associating Perriello with a liberal Democrat like Pelosi is an obvious move for Hurt. Voters in the district don't always vote for Republicans, but they are generally conservative.

The district gave George W. Bush healthy majorities in 2000 and 2004 but voted for Democratic governors in 2001 and 2005. Republican Bob McDonnell won back the area in the 2009 gubernatorial race. Longtime congressman Virgil Goode was

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In 2009, Identity Theft Cost Americans

Over $54 Billion.

Source: Javelin Strategy & Research. "2010 Identity Fraud Survey Report." February 2010.

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A Serious and Growing Problem.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the nation. Over 11 million Americans fell victim to the crime in 2009, at a cost of over $54 billion. *(Source: Javelin Strategy & Research. "2010 Identity Fraud Survey Report." February 2010.)*

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elected in 1996 as a Democrat, but he became an independent in 2000 and a Republican in 2002. His party switch and his increasingly conservative voting record mirrored a political shift in the district.

Then in 2008, Perriello defeated Goode by 727 votes, even as John McCain was carrying the district by 3 percentage points. Although unsuccessful, the Perriello and Obama campaigns nevertheless energized blacks and Charlottesville liberals.

Now, as one of the most vulnerable Democrats in 2010, Perriello must rely on his superior organization—his campaign has six offices around the district—and his ability to far outspend his opponent. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Perriello has raised more than $2.3 million, with congressional liberals like George Miller of California helping bring in donations from the Democratic establishment. Hurt, by contrast, has raised only $771,000.

The high volume of cash flooding in indicates how desperately Democrats want to maintain the seat, in the face of the expected Republican wave. But despite his financial lead, Perriello has the disadvantage of being associated with the hated big-spending Congress. This time around, the motivated voters are not college students but fiscal conservatives.

"The biggest issue that I hear as I travel across the Fifth District from the voters and from the people is a concern about the spending," Hurt says. "I hear the concern about the debt, $13 trillion in debt. And I hear concern about the effect that will necessarily have on our ability to compete economically, our ability to promote job growth in the Fifth District."

According to the latest poll of likely voters, conducted by SurveyUSA and WDBJ News in Roanoke, Hurt has jumped to a 23-point lead over Perriello.

SurveyUSA says this finding shows "an energized Republican base and an enthusiasm gap for Democrats." Back at her Scottsville office, Tocci has her own prediction for Perriello this fall: "He's gonna lose by a large margin." ♦

Lone Economic Star

What the rest of the country can learn from Texas.

BY ELI LEHRER

Austin

On the 80-mile drive from San Antonio to the Texas capitol in Austin, it's difficult to miss the signs of growth. At every highway exit, it seems, huge new shopping malls greet motorists. Valleys where cattle grazed five years ago now sport shiny new Target stores, tract homes, and tennis courts. Between 2000 and 2009, Texas added about 4 million residents, more than half of them migrants from elsewhere in the nation. And Texas will almost certainly emerge from the recession with the nation's strongest and most important economy.

In May alone, Texas, America's second most populous state, added over 75,000 jobs—more than California (the biggest), New York (third biggest), and Florida (fourth biggest) combined. Texas has shown consistent gains in 10 of the 11 categories of private employment that the Bureau of Labor Statistics measures. The state is far more than cowboys and oil: It has several of the nation's leading medical research centers (Baylor and UT hospitals among them), one of the biggest computer makers (Dell), and a financial industry that never took a turn for the worse. And, even though unemployment remains a tick over 8 percent (about a point and a half lower than the national average), the rapid growth is bringing this down quickly. During the last week in June, the job-hunt website Monster.com offered more new job openings in Texas than in California even though the Golden State has over 10 million more people. In a nation looking for economic good news, Texas stands out as a bright spot.

Texas's economic growth and its success in attracting migrants defy easy explanations. High oil prices helped, but economic growth in Texas has actually accelerated as pain at the pump has eased. Likewise, while the lack of a state income tax, (mostly) nice weather, and Republican-dominated state politics may create a business-friendly environment, Florida shares all these attributes and has one of the nation's worst economies. The real secret to Texas's speedy recovery and rapid growth may lie in the closely interrelated trends of limited but activist government and affordable homeownership.

The story of Texas's governance centers on Rick Perry, George W. Bush's successor and Texas's longest serving governor. Like Bush, Perry is no minimalist. He has greatly upped spending on public schools, improved the universities, and funneled lots of public dollars into efforts to make Texas a medical research hub. He's departed from Bush's model, however, in that he hasn't increased overall spending faster than population growth and inflation or made any large tax cuts. While not all of the spending has shown results (test scores remain low), it has made him popular. And in one major field, transportation infrastructure, Perry can point to a very real success.

"For the first time, in the early 2000s, we had a governor and a legislature that said they were going to make transportation a major statewide priority," says Justin Keener, vice president of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative Austin-based think tank. "Texas has had tremendous growth and that brought pain. With the roads, we've addressed some of that pain." Thanks largely to new toll road authorities established mostly under Perry's administration, every major Texas metropolitan area—the state has five of the nation's 25 largest

Eli Lehrer is the national director of the Center on Finance, Insurance and Real Estate at the Heartland Institute.

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Great "Peace Flotilla" Ambush

How Israel fell into a trap, carefully set by its enemies

A short while ago, a "peace flotilla" of six ships set out to bring relief to the so-called "beleaguered" Gaza Strip and to break a naval blockade that Israel had imposed. Five of the ships peacefully obeyed the instructions of the Israeli military to unload their cargo in Ashdod, an Israeli port. There the cargo was examined. That which was, indeed, peaceful cargo, was promptly transferred to Gaza. The sixth vessel, the MAVI MARMARA, offered violent resistance to the Israeli commandos who had boarded the vessel. A melee ensued in which nine of the "peace lovers," all Turks, offered violent armed resistance and were killed.

What are the facts?

Sponsored and egged on by Turkey. This "peace flotilla" was sponsored by a Turkish terror organization disguised as a "charity" and encouraged and egged on by the Turkish government. Its principal purpose was not to bring supplies to Gaza, but to confront Israel, which had instituted a naval blockade against the Gaza Strip. It was a win-win situation for the flotilla: Either they would reach Gaza and thus accomplish their stated purpose or they would become "martyrs," an almost more desirable outcome for this group.

Gaza is under the control of Hamas, which is considered to be a rogue terror regime by the United States and many other countries. It is sworn to the destruction of Israel. Israel, in a splendid gesture of good will, had abandoned Gaza, removed its military and evacuated all 9,000 of its citizens, who had lived there for generations. This gesture of good will was a futile one. Instead of showing any appreciation for Israel's accommodation, the Hamas government of Gaza showed its "gratitude" by lobbing thousands of rockets on an almost daily basis into Israeli cities within its reach.

Hundreds of tunnels connect the Egyptian-controlled Sinai with Gaza. Huge amounts of contraband, including rockets and other weapons – virtually all of them of Iranian provenance – enter Gaza through these tunnels, under the benevolent neglect of the Egyptian military.

No hunger or emergency in Gaza. The clamor that Gaza needs outside help, that its inhabitants lack the essentials for leading a normal life, is simply not correct. It is a propaganda ploy to demonize Israel. There is no hunger in Gaza and no hardship other than that imposed by its terrorist government, whose only inalterable purpose is the destruction of Israel. Tons of thousands of truckloads of food, medicines, and other essentials are allowed into Gaza on a daily basis. There is no shortage of medicine. Gasoline and diesel oil are amply provided. Israel supplies electricity to the Strip. The only thing that Israel does not allow to enter is material that could be used to construct weaponry.

Every day all Gazans who need medical attention that is not available in the Strip are allowed passage to be treated (without cost, of course) in Israel's world-class hospitals. It is remarkable that all this help is being extended while Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier who was kidnapped by Hamas over four years ago, is not allowed even a visit by the Red Cross.

> "… Israel's effort to stop the 'peace flotilla'… cast righteous Israel (once again) in the role of villain. What a sham!"

The blockade of the Gaza coast is essential for preserving the peace. Had Israel allowed the "peace flotilla" to enter a Gaza port, it would inevitably have led the way to the establishment of a de facto Iranian port in the Mediterranean, 40 miles from Tel Aviv and not much farther from Jerusalem. It is quite likely that the cargo of the "peace flotilla" was indeed peaceful goods. But there can be no question at all that, once the blockade was broken or abandoned, subsequent shipments would have included Iranian armaments too bulky or too heavy to supply through the tunnels and, most likely, also well-equipped and well trained-Iranian military personnel. What country would possibly allow anything like that to happen?

It is, of course, most regrettable that the intervention of Israeli commandos to stop the "peace flotilla" caused the deaths of nine Turks. But it was unavoidable. The trained "activists" of the MAVI MARMARA confronted the Israelis with hatchets, spears, clubs, and firearms, threw one commando overboard, and insured that a fire fight could not be avoided. Nine deaths, nine martyrs, was the expected and ultimately desired result.

Israel acted exactly as it should have and as could have been expected. No country would allow a blockade to be broken. Can anybody imagine that, even without an established blockade being in place, the U.S. Coast Guard would allow a vessel of a foreign country to dock in an American port without obeying an order to stop and be searched if necessary? But the world got into an uproar, the U.N. went into overtime, and Turkey – the instigator of the whole affair – declared Israel to be a criminal nation and recalled its ambassador. All of this happened only a short time after North Korea, without provocation, torpedoed a South Korean vessel, causing the deaths of 46 sailors. The world barely noticed. Angry mobs did not parade through the capitals of the world and no North Korean flags were burned. But Israel's effort to stop the "peace flotilla" exercised the irate attention of the whole world and cast righteous Israel (once again) in the role of villain. What a sham!

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cities—has built new roads or greatly expanded existing ones.

These new roads, in turn, have contributed to a climate that has kept homes affordable. Texas didn't impose urban growth boundaries around its cities the way many other Sunbelt states did, kept zoning flexible, never imposed a statewide building code, and, because of its prodigious road building, put more areas within easy commuting distance of its job centers. "Home affordability is key," says demographer Wendell Cox, the author of several studies on Texas. "That is why Texas has avoided most of the bubble and the recession." According to data Cox has compiled, an average home in Texas at the height of the real estate bubble cost only about three times the median income in the state even as the price of a typical California home soared to more than ten times that state's median income. As a result, Cox argues, it was possible to build homes in Texas without resorting to the gimmicky, subprime loans that so damaged the rest of the economy. Through the whole recession, foreclosures barely budged in the state.

But additional factors, Cox and other analysts concede, have also contributed to Texas's relative prosperity. To begin with, the highest property taxes in the country as a percentage of home value (about $2,200 a year on a typical house) made it difficult for developers to "bank" Texas land without building homes. Likewise, the inland locations of major Texas cities meant that they simply had more room to grow than ocean-hemmed metropolises like San Francisco and New York. Finally, huge public and private investments in the arts, parks, and universities have brought the state a large affluent professional class that would have once scorned Texas as a backwater.

In short, a state known for size and excess has succeeded because of public policies that avoided excesses of big government overspending, poorly conceived private lending, and business-government land planning. In this way, Texas offers important lessons for other states looking to claw their way out of the recession. ♦

Onward, Christian Zionists

The fastest growing Israel support group in America. BY JENNIFER RUBIN

In Washington, D.C.'s convention center they danced the horah, sang Hebrew songs, and waved American and Israeli flags. Charlie Daniels played Hatikvah on his fiddle. It wasn't a bar mitzvah, or a gathering of the pro-Israel group AIPAC. It was the fifth annual summit of an even larger pro-Israel organization, the nation's largest: Christians United for Israel, better known as CUFI.

John Hagee

A few hours before addressing the convention, its founder, Pastor John Hagee, explained how CUFI came to exist. "I went to Israel in 1978 as a tourist with a group of people from my church and I came home a Zionist," he said. "I felt the presence of God in the city of Jerusalem like no place on earth." Praying at the Western Wall, he realized he had to "do everything in my power to bring Christians and Jews together in an atmosphere of mutual esteem and acceptance."

Jennifer Rubin is Commentary*'s contributing editor.*

At first, he didn't know how to begin. But in 1981, after an Israeli airstrike blew up the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak, "the American media went after Israel hammer and claw. I saw the door of opportunity open. I told my wife as we watched the television with the news anchor berating Israel and Menachem Begin, 'We are going to have a night for Israel.'"

Hagee approached the local Jewish leaders to suggest a gala fundraiser. He deadpanned, "They looked at me like I had a serious and contagious rash." Hagee won them over, held a news conference with an orthodox rabbi announcing the event, and "within hours started receiving death threats at the church. We had the night for Israel, and it was terrific." When a bomb threat came, he remembered declaring, "If these gun-toting anti-Semites think they can shut us down by threatening us, we are going to do it every year until they get used to it!"

Through his ministry and then with the founding of CUFI in 2006, Hagee has been at it ever since. "CUFI began with 400 evangelicals in February 2006. Today we have 426,000 members." The purpose of the group, Hagee said, was to give "every pro-Israel Christian and Christian church the opportunity to stand up and speak up for Israel." When they lobby on Capitol Hill, he said, his members "ask the leadership of our government to stop putting pressure on Israel to divide Jerusalem and the land of Israel."

Since 2006, CUFI has held hundreds of events nationwide, raising $43 million for humanitarian work (including that of Migdal Ohr in Galilee which serves disadvantaged youth and the Kiryat Yam absorption center for

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Ethiopian Jews) and inspiring Christian support for the Jewish state. Pastor Scott Thomas of Lakeland, Florida, explained that thousands have rediscovered the "Judeo part of our faith." He recalled a Tampa Night for Israel that raised money for flak jackets to protect IDF troops in Tiberius, and a night in Pensacola that bought a bomb shelter for residents of Sderot, the small town on the receiving end of rockets launched by Hamas from Gaza.

Now, with the Iranian nuclear threat growing, relations with the Obama administration tumultuous, and assaults on Israel in international bodies a daily occurrence, Israel can use some real friends. At the banquet, Senator Joe Lieberman—he introduced himself as "your brother Joseph"—observed that this "is a time when the people of Israel feel more vulnerable and isolated than in a long time. . . . But because of CUFI and Christian Zionists throughout the world the people and the children of Israel do not feel isolated from the international community of faith."

CUFI members affirm the consonance between their faith, patriotism, and support for Israel. Thomas explains, "When I stand up for Israel, I stand up for America." He says that his members' religious roots bring them to support Israel, but recent events have mobilized them to confront biased media accounts, fundraise, lobby, educate fellow Christians, and pray for Israel. "The Bible directs us, but the facts inform us," he says.

Unlike many Jewish organizations, CUFI continues to grow. Pastor Carlos Ortiz, who conducts Hispanic outreach for the group, has helped bring in 1,500 churches. Among Jews, there remains some skepticism and some outright hostility. Yet Hagee noted progress among those Jews whose support for Israel is grounded in their faith. "There is a level of comfort between Christians and Jews who believe in and accept the Torah as the word of God." His own devotion is an expression of his Christian faith. He explained:

> The Bible from Genesis to Revelation is a Zionist text. To read and understand the Bible is to accept the reality that the Jewish people are not living where they chose but where God chose. There is a real estate contract recorded in the Bible with the boundaries of Israel, given as clearly as the human tongue can express. And the land is God's gift to the Jewish people. That's not political. It is the will of the sovereign and eternal God.

Hagee is bracingly candid about the historical underpinnings of Jews' mistrust:

> I understand the fear of some Jewish people of Christians because for 2,000 years they were killed under the sign of the cross. When a Jewish person sees the cross he sees an electric chair. When a Christian sees a cross he sees hope and redemption. Two thousand years of suffering won't be overcome overnight.

In addition, antipathy toward CUFI may be attributable partly to aversion to the rest of the Christian right's political agenda. As for Jews' concern about Christian proselytizing, Ortiz says suspicion fades "when they see we are not trying to convert them."

Hagee is a charismatic preacher with a sonorous baritone voice. At the banquet, he held the crowd spellbound, explaining Israel's plight and the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. He reminded the crowd that John F. Kennedy went to Berlin at the height of the Cold War, "an outpost of democracy in a sea of tyranny." He quoted Kennedy: "Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was '*civis Romanus sum*.' Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is '*Ich bin ein Berliner*.'" Hagee then pivoted:

> I stand here at a time when Israel is a tiny outpost of freedom and democracy in a sea of tyranny. . . . Permit me to say something to you straight from the heart. Please know that what I say to you now is a sentiment shared by millions of Christians across America and around the world. Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "*Ani Yisraeli*—I am an Israeli."

As he recited the litany of threats and insults to the Jewish state, he repeated the mantra again and again until 4,000 Christians stood shouting, "I am an Israeli."

Former deputy national security adviser Elliott Abrams, who oversaw Israel policy in the Bush administration, appreciates that support. "American Jews ought to notice that there are actually more evangelicals in this country than Jews by about 20 or 30 to 1," he says. "With the Jewish population shrinking as a percentage of the American people, Christians are an increasingly critical base of support for Israel—and groups like CUFI are begging us to accept their help. We should accept it with gratitude and enthusiasm."

CUFI activists understand that America's enemies—Islamist terrorists—are Israel's enemies, too. They appreciate a robust defense of both countries. Abrams in a panel discussion urged those present to make their voices heard when, for example, a lawmaker "plays footsie with CAIR." The crowd erupted. Co-panelist Malcolm Hoenlein, of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, demanded "transparency" from the builders of a mosque near Ground Zero and warned against groups that would "undermine the fundamental values of the United States." He too got a rousing ovation.

CUFI executive director David Brog says recent events have caught his members' attention. "They are upset this president is taking a different approach to Israel and there is daylight between our countries for the first time." He bristles at the notion that CUFI is "politicizing" foreign policy. Indeed, Brog worries about the "bipartisan fraying" of support for Israel. With CUFI's Democratic members, including many Hispanics, he hopes to "affect the debate in the Democratic party. It would be a tragedy if one of the two parties ceased to be pro-Israel." After all, Brog says, "We are speaking for a traditional foreign policy. We must stand for principle and not just power."

Ortiz says these are critical times for Israel. He tells the story of the Jewish queen Esther, when the Jews were threatened with annihilation in ancient Persia. "Her uncle comes to her and says, 'You gotta move, baby, or your people will perish.'" CUFI is on the move. It has no intention of allowing Israel to perish. ♦

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The Unpresidential President

Barack Obama has managed a rare feat: The longer he holds office, the more he diminishes in stature.

By James W. Ceaser

From charisma to populism—this is the slippery slope down which Barack Obama has been sliding over the past two years. In June 2008, Obama the candidate described his nomination as "the moment when . . . our planet began to heal." In June 2010, Obama the president promised his partisans he would find an "ass to kick."

With the peculiar magic of his presidential campaign now a faded memory, Obama is shoring up support by the cruder method of divisive appeals. Long before the current (already hugely extended) campaign season began, Obama made it a practice to target opposition symbols ("the insurance industry," "speculators," "a bunch of fat cat bankers on Wall Street," the oil companies), call out and assail individual opponents (Rush Limbaugh, Mitch McConnell, John Boehner), and refer disparagingly to the Tea Party movement and Republicans in general ("this crowd"). More than a half-year before the midterm elections, he tried to revive his electoral base of "young people, African Americans, Latinos, and women" by taking a page from Al Gore's 2000 campaign and embracing the shop-worn slogan, "I won't stop fighting for you."

An ass-thumping president frantically fighting for the little guy—it's hard to imagine George Washington or Abraham Lincoln choosing to project an image of this kind. Barack Obama has managed a rare feat in American history: The longer he is president, the less presidential he has become. Obama has reversed the usual process of growth and maturation, appearing today far more like a candidate for the presidency—and a very ordinary one at that—than he did during the latter stages of his campaign.

He has also become practitioner-in-chief of what Alexander Hamilton referred to in *Federalist* 68 as the "little arts of popularity." These arts, Hamilton well knew, would become an inevitable feature of democratic politics. But their spread from the province of political campaigns into the "normal" conduct of the presidency represents a dramatic reversal of the Founders' design. The Constitution was crafted to prevent a campaign-style presidency; Obama is in the midst of creating one.

Although many will quibble about the right words for describing Obama's leadership style, the general direction in which he has been heading is beyond dispute. In January 2010, the Obama-friendly *Huffington Post* ran a headline: "President Takes Populist Message on the Road." Even some of his staunchest and most serious supporters, among them *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, have commended Obama for "turning toward populism." By "populism" these observers were referring to divisive "us against them" appeals meant to rile up and energize a base.

What the president's supporters add by way of explanation, if excuses for employing the "little arts of popularity" are still necessary, is that Obama is only responding to an unprecedented series of attacks from his detractors. But this explanation misses the main point, which is not the alleged behavior of gatherings of citizens, but the norms and standards of the presidency. Many past presidents endured harsh criticisms from the press and from popular movements of their day, but considered it unpresidential to respond in kind. Not Barack Obama, who has found his comfort zone in magnifying and then assaulting any kind of opposition. This excuse for Obama's style also overlooks that he does not want for other means to get his message across. Obama has at his beck and call a staff of professional spokespersons, not to mention the editorial page of the *New York Times*.

It may be, however, that Obama has created a box for himself from which he cannot escape. He has so monopolized and personalized the public relations aspect of his office that now only his own voice can speak for the presidency. Profligacy in the use of public access—almost a speech a day—has made indirectness impossible. A president who

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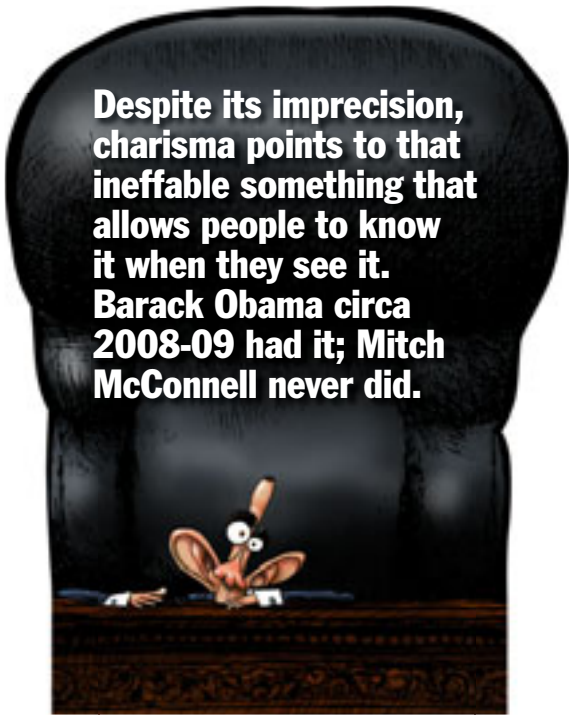
has become his own chief point man puts at risk an asset that is helpful to his standing and vital for the nation's political system: the dignity of the presidential office.

Obama's embrace of a populist campaign style generated enough consternation that he backtracked temporarily. In a commencement address at the University of Michigan on May 1, Obama adopted a more statesmanlike posture, deploring the lack of "civility" that is "starting to creep into the center of our discourse." "We can't expect to solve our problems if all we do is tear each other down. You can disagree with a certain policy without demonizing the person who espouses it." To emphasize his impartiality, he sought to put himself above the fray, decrying the excesses "practiced by both fringes of the ideological spectrum, by the left and the right." Yet far from calming the country, this lofty tone served only to grate on those who found in this speech a repetition of a by now all-too-familiar Obama tactic of earnestly preaching what he does not practice—a technique he has used especially in those matters in which "fairness" and "good government" are most at issue, such as the public finance of campaigns (which Obama supported before exempting himself) or the promise of post-partisanship (which he abandoned from almost his first day in office). For a statesmanlike speech such as the one Obama gave in Michigan to work, the speaker must have cultivated the "ethos" of presidentialism. Obama had long since given up on this effort.



Charisma

The "popular arts," as that phrase was used by Hamilton, referred to the various methods of boosting public support: by dazzling (if one can); practicing an easy familiarity; promising and offering generous benefits; raising energy and anger by targeting and dividing; and blaming convenient scapegoats. Gaining approval by these methods was contrasted with winning support by achieving stature, which comes from public recognition for good service, displaying admirable qualities, or demonstrating sound judgment. Stature is manifest when a leader establishes himself "in the esteem and confidence" of a considerable portion of the people, so that public standing includes a dimension of "looking up."

Stature is one of the most elusive and precious qualities in political life, and it is almost always in short supply. Executives (governors) and public servants (including military leaders, such as Colin Powell or David Petraeus), who build records of service, are in a better position to acquire it than legislators, whose main activity is expressing a point of view. Being elected to the presidency usually confers an initial measure of stature, not just because running a successful campaign represents an accomplishment, but also because the office has been developed over the years to confer on its occupant dignity and distinction. But how a president acts in office affects whether he adds to or diminishes this initial stature. Slipping approval ratings may tempt presidential advisers to counsel a president to try to revive his fortunes by indulging in the popular arts, but what few of them bother to tell the boss is that approval ratings are not always measures of stature. Efforts to "bump up the positives" can often come at the cost of the president's stature. "Fighting for you" may get a crowd worked up, but it doesn't add to a president's dignity.

The practice of the popular arts is as old as democratic politics. Only the names that designate its various techniques have changed. America's Founders were partial to expressions like "playing the favorite," "popular leaders," "sycophants," and (most often) "demagogues," a term that connected their thought back to the classical treatments of popular government in Thucydides, Aristotle, and Plutarch. The category "demagogue" includes not only lowly rabble rousers who appeal to anger and fear (Cleon or George Wallace), or those who incite envy and gin up class divisions (Gaius Gracchus or John Edwards), but also, in John Jay's wonderful description, "those brilliant appearances of genius [who], like transient meteors, sometimes mislead as well as dazzle."

Charisma, one of the modern terms for the popular arts, was coined by the German sociologist Max Weber around the turn of the 20th century. The word means the "gift of

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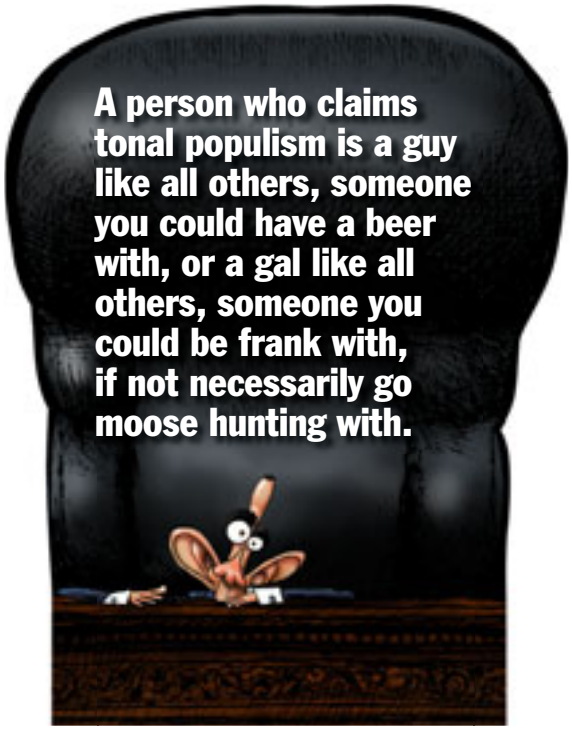
grace" in its New Testament usage, but Weber defined it as "a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which one is 'set apart' from ordinary people and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." While Weber meant charisma to be a scientific concept, it has turned out to be anything but, and is frequently invoked today to describe celebrities in the fields of sports or entertainment. For all of its imprecision, however, charisma points to that ineffable *something* that allows people to know it when they see it. Barack Obama circa 2008-09 had it; Mitch McConnell never did.

Weber stressed the relational aspect of charisma. It depends not just on the qualities of the figure from above, but also on the needs of the followers from below. In the many narratives written so far of Obama's meteoric rise in 2008, insufficient attention has been given to the demand side. Obama came to the fore in a period that was charismatically challenged—indeed, strikingly lacking in political leaders of stature or even, more modestly, of political heft. Take the Senate. Who in 2008 stood out as a substantial figure, other than John McCain or Ted Kennedy? Was it Chris Dodd? Harry Reid? The same held true for the House of Representatives—where a deficit of stature is more to be expected as most "stars" generally leave to move up the political ladder. Still, in the past there were longtime representatives seen as substantial figures like Sam Rayburn or Tip O'Neill or, more recently perhaps, Dick Gephardt. Today, no one in the House even approaches this kind of standing. Perhaps the best-known congressman, Barney Frank is clever and intelligent, but often presents himself as a kind of prankster or clown. As for the governors, there were no doubt competent individuals in 2008—Mitt Romney among them—but there were few who were known nationally. The exception was Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is to this day still most widely remembered as a barbarian or a terminator.



What was (and is) true of politics on the American scene was truer of the world as a whole. Who among the active leaders qualified as a significant statesman or even a person of enormous standing, someone whom the public could name, like a Tony Blair, a Nelson Mandela, or a Mikhail Gorbachev? Instead, the video photo-ops of the world figures—displayed always against a light blue backdrop—at those innumerable summits showed in 2008 a barely recognizable Gordon Brown, conspicuous by his dourness; Nicolas Sarkozy, bounding about like a nervous ferret; and Angela Merkel (perhaps the most gifted of the group). Otherwise, it was a total blank, with no one able to name the prime minister of Japan or say who's Hu in China. The only personages on the world stage known generally to Americans in 2008 were two obvious demagogues, Hugo Chávez and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Next to all of these ordinary (or contemptible) personages appeared a new and attractive figure, unsullied by previous involvement in political activity, offering to fill this dreary void.

A touch of charisma is a nice thing for a president to have. Harry Truman and Gerald Ford—men who made no pretense, because they could not, to possessing the "gift"—may have been disadvantaged by their lack of it, although the same could surely have been said of two great men, and credible presidents, John Adams and James Madison. In the final analysis, however, charisma sits uneasily with a republican form of government. Its very terms of belief in exceptional powers stand in tension with the idea of authority limited by law. The potential conflict is greater when flatterers convince themselves that the leader's charisma is an asset that the nation cannot afford to lose. Obama supporters today regularly insist that his personal standing in the world is a vital element of America's soft power and the key to altering world perceptions about America. Obama himself reportedly expressed this very position to Democratic members of Congress in the summer of 2008: "I have become a symbol [abroad] of the possibility of America returning to our best traditions." Following on this belief, the nation's foreign policy has become hostage to the president's charisma. Anything that sustains Obama's image, even if it involves the president apologizing abroad for America's sins or errors, is justified by the canons of a new understanding of realpolitik that promises to bring substantial returns.

Obama still retains an aura of charisma abroad, though

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to date it has yet to bring any of the benefits that were promised. But this kind of soft-power realism hardly bespeaks a foreign policy conducted on the basis of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind," where principles are set down as markers designed to help open eyes to the rights of man. It represents instead a foreign policy based on promoting an indecent pandering to an evanescent infatuation with a single personality.

Tonal Populism

Populism, another modern word used to designate the popular arts, is so ambiguous a term that, other than expressing the notion of a vague popular sentiment, it has no fixed content. It can only be understood if it is broken down into two distinct types: "tonal" (or "soft") populism and "political" (or "hard") populism.

Tonal populism refers to a style of politics that disdains pretension and insists on the virtue of the plain and the down-to-earth—though not necessarily the average. A person who claims tonal populism is a guy like all others, someone you could have a beer with, or a gal like all others, someone you could be frank with, if not go moose hunting with. Populism in this sense may once have been thought vulgar, at least from an aristocratic point of view, but America's democratic mores virtually ensured that it would eventually win its place as an acceptable and even respectable part of our politics. Tonal populism is anti-elitist, but without any special policy message. It can mildly amuse, as when Lamar Alexander, a former college president, campaigned for governor of Tennessee and then president of the United States wearing a red and black plaid shirt. More recently, there was Scott Brown's self-presentation in his stump speech for the Senate campaign in Massachusetts: "Friends and fellow citizens, I'm Scott Brown, I'm from Wrentham, I drive a truck and I'm asking for your vote." Forget Wrentham and fellow citizens; it is the truck that says it all.

It is commonly said that tonal populism originated with Andrew Jackson, who made no bones about his common origins or tastes. But this style only achieved full mainstream status when it became bipartisan during the 1840 presidential campaign, which John Quincy Adams described as marking "a revolution in the habits and manners of the people." The Whig party, which hitherto had disdained "truckling" after votes, made the fateful decision to out-Jackson Jacksonianism. The Whigs invented the notion of the campaign as a mass spectacle by mobilizing the party faithful to hold rallies, sing songs, and enact dramatic skits in celebration of the down-home virtues of "Old Tip" (William Henry Harrison), whose simple ways were captured in the campaign's symbols of the log cabin and hard cider. The slightest whiff of deference in American politics became a thing of the past.

Not everyone, of course, can successfully claim tonal populism, nor should they try. There are only so many country lawyers. For a politician to try to force himself into the mold of an ordinary guy when it does not fit can make him look not only phony, but ridiculous. Just ask John Kerry, who campaigned for the presidency in 2004 in a leather jacket, returning on weekends to one of his several mansions to drink green tea or go windsurfing. It never sold. Fortunately for American politics, there are other ways besides emphasizing tonal populism to rise to prominence, including demonstrating competence, achieving stature, and possessing charisma.

If claiming tonal populism is not essential for an American political leader, it is nevertheless important not to run afoul of it and be viewed as an "elitist." Some who employ tonal populism adopt the demagogic ploy of trying to chase from politics those who have an old family name, are wealthy (especially when the wealth is inherited), or have attained a high educational status at a prized institution. While these objective indicators of elitism can present challenges to certain aspiring political leaders, they are rarely disqualifying factors. Americans can be remarkably tolerant, even of the wealthy and the privileged. But what people cannot easily forgive is an open attitude of elitism that expresses disdain for the average person. John Edwards, who ran for the presidency in 2008 as the self-proclaimed people's candidate, was able to survive his multimillion-dollar fortune, his huge mansion, and even his $400 haircuts; what he could never have survived was his comment, only disclosed later, that he could not stand attending state fairs where "fat rednecks try to shove food down my face. I know I'm the people's senator, but do I have to hang out with them?"

Political analysts agree that Democrats more commonly run afoul of tonal populism than Republicans, despite the fact that Republicans suffer more often from the objective disadvantages of family name and wealth, though probably no longer of educational status. The reason is that intellectual spokesmen on the Democratic side, while proclaiming their love of the people, prove themselves congenitally unable to hide their disdain for the people's tastes and opinions. But generalizations about the parties do not govern every individual case. Bill Clinton remains the prime example of the Democrat who, even with a Yale law degree and a Rhodes Scholarship, had no trouble claiming the mantle of tonal populism. It was not just the fact that he came from a dirt-poor background in Arkansas and a troubled family or that he spoke with a Southern accent. He was saved by his vices. Any man who was known for gobbling down two Big Macs in one sitting, who could count among his girlfriends Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, and who had the nickname "Bubba," was beyond all suspicion of elitism.

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On the Republican side, the most interesting cases are the two Bushes, George H.W. and George W. Both of them carried the triple burden of family name, inherited wealth, and high educational status. These damaged George H.W. somewhat, especially when added to his "elite" government service as ambassador to the U.N. and to China and as director of the CIA. Ann Richards famously mocked him at the 1988 Democratic convention, in as elongated a Texas drawl as anyone had ever heard: "Poor George, he can't help it. He was born with a silver foot in his mouth." Bush overcame the charge to be elected, though the old ghost came back to haunt him in 1992, when, during a visit to a supermarket, he apparently expressed astonishment at seeing a price scanner. This immediately confirmed for many that he was a man "out of touch" with the average American, a charge that struck hard during tough economic times.

The case of George W. is more intriguing. On the scale of objective factors, W. was in a worse position than his father, as he was a son of a president and held degrees from both Yale and Harvard. But by the middle of his first term, he had been rescued from almost any taint of elitism. The smugness of his detractors, who so relentlessly attacked his supposedly lowbrow tastes and intelligence and ridiculed his evangelical faith, made it impossible for them to put any daylight between W. and middle America. They made George W. into an average American and had to live with their choice.

Barack Obama's relation to tonal populism has been the most complicated of all the modern presidents. He made virtually no effort in the 2008 campaign to claim or establish himself as a "familiar" figure. He was able to eschew this kind of appeal because he had more compelling qualities. Not only was there his initial charisma, but also, as the campaign progressed, there was his reputation for intellectual bearing, as displayed in his Philadelphia oration on race, and his remarkable "coolness" and sobriety, as shown in his calm approach to the financial crisis that struck in September. Obama had no need to be of the people, because he was so evidently above them. Obama was, and in most ways remains today, a conspicuously nonpopulist figure in the tonal sense.

At the same time, it should have been easy for Barack Obama to escape offending the populist spirit and become a winner on all counts. Coming from a broken family without wealth or status and being from a race that has always been on the outside in American life, he should have been immune to any charge of elitism. All he had to do was live down his Harvard law degree and his position as a professor at the University of Chicago, hardly an insurmountable task for a talented politician. Yet in what must count as a clear blot on the ledger of his political skills, Obama has repeatedly blundered. His series of self-inflicted errors began with the decision during the campaign to stop wearing a flag pin on his lapel (which he later put back on) and continued with his nearly fatal comment in San Francisco about the "bitter" Midwestern workers, who "cling to guns or religion . . . as a way to explain their frustrations." Hillary Clinton almost ended his campaign with the charge of elitism. Obama was reduced to pleading his case on the objective criteria: "I am amused about this notion of elitist, given that when you're raised by a single mom, when you were on food stamps for a while when you were growing up, you went to school on scholarship."

Since becoming president he has repeated his mistake, beginning with a gratuitous accusation against Officer James Crowley of acting "stupidly" in arresting Obama's friend, Harvard English professor Henry Louis Gates. Following a half apology, he made matters worse by calling Crowley and Gates together to the White House for the so-called "beer summit." In principle, there is nothing more populist in America than guys "having a beer." And yet when the photographs of the summit were released, the only guy who looked at ease with his beer was Crowley. It remains a conspicuous fact about this administration that no one working for the president could plausibly utter an "Aw shucks" in public and get away with it. No wonder none of Obama's aides restrained him from trying to score points by ridiculing Scott Brown's truck.

Tonal populism has become part of the fabric and even the fun of American politics. Still, it has a growing number of critics today, especially on the left, as Republicans have proven more adept at tapping into its spirit. These critics no longer, of course, dismiss the idea of democracy and scoff, like Coriolanus, at "the beast with many heads." To the contrary, they profess to be the people's truest friends, objecting only to the fact that the people do not know how to serve the people's real interests. There is doubtless a certain merit in questioning a populism that goes too far in celebrating mere common sense. But this criticism would be entitled to far more respect if it were not being used to promote the claim to rule by a class of experts that serves a partisan end.

Political Populism

Obama's distance from tonal populism led many to think that he was ill-suited for engaging in populist appeals of any kind. But whether awkward in the task or not, Obama has taken to "political" populism in a most assertive way. Political populism involves pitting one part of the community against another in order to generate energy and boost popularity. Like tonal populism, it identifies a popular "us" ("the people") and an oligarchic "them" (the "elite" or "special interests"), but, not content merely to establish sympathies and associations, it goes on

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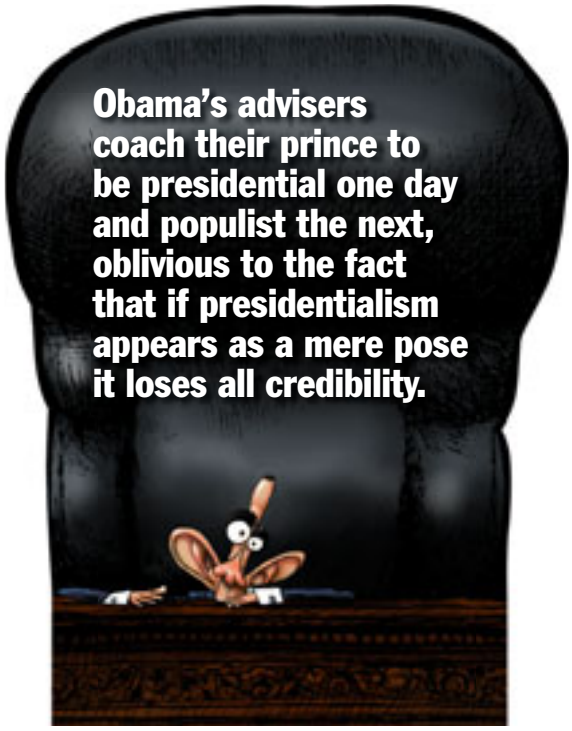
to promise important policy changes, such as punishing the biggest interests and spreading the wealth around.

There is both a leftist and a rightist version of political populism. The left speaks of an economic power elite that is manipulating the system to its advantage, oppressing the people. The right speaks of a class of experts bent on using public authority to transform morals and run people's lives. The left will resolve the problem by taking on Big Capital; the right by confronting Big Government. These two versions reflect parts of the genuine public philosophies of liberalism and conservatism, with the result that elements of the two populisms are apt to appear in public discourse as genuine arguments. But political populism in its full sense occurs when the populist themes become the core of the presentation, deployed to win support and boost or solidify opinion. Politicians clearly know when they are "going populist." When the president launches an attack on a Supreme Court decision for aiding "Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans," there is no mystery in what he is up to. Subtlety is rarely a feature of a populist appeal.



Populism as a technique is often contrasted with a statesman-like tone, which normally aims to appeal to reason and tamp down conflict and division. Statesmanship in the highest sense is the management of affairs for the public good, which in rare cases may require an approach that divides. But the statesman only adopts this path when necessary and never for mere political gain. The usual posture of the statesman is calming and deliberate, which is what is meant by the term "presidential." To engage in populism and parallel demagogic tricks—to blame others, to mock, to display no magnanimity toward opponents—all of these actions necessarily appear unpresidential. They are fitting for campaigns, but they make a president look smaller.

There was no shortage of political populist rhetoric in Obama's campaign speeches in 2008, but this element clearly took a backseat to the attraction of his person and to his grander themes. Now that his themes have dissipated into thin air and the charisma has worn off, political populism has emerged as a dominant characteristic of Obama's leadership. But coming from a president, rather than a candidate, it appears at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

The Presidential Office

Modern presidents have the twin responsibilities of being a policy advocate (or party leader) and a constitutional officer. These two roles inevitably are in tension, and one of the great challenges of a president is to find the proper balance. Obama seems uninterested in locating this balance. One of the norms of being a constitutional officer is to appear as "president of all the people," even when others may not act as if they accept him as such. Advocacy, no matter how vigorous, must respect a set of limits and be characterized by forbearance. The nation needs this understanding of the presidency to serve as a symbol of national unity—and Obama may soon need it to call on the deeper reservoirs of support in the event that conditions become far more trying than anyone today suspects.

With his stately voice, his elegant presence, and his command of the language, Barack Obama possesses more personal tools to be presidential than any of his predecessors since Dwight D. Eisenhower, but—Bill Clinton, of course, excepted—he has shown less inclination to be so. By urging him down the path of populism, Obama's political counselors do not seem to have the slightest clue of the damage they have done to him, because they have no conception of what the office of the presidency is all about. They coach their prince to be presidential one day and populist the next, oblivious to the fact that if presidentialism appears as a mere pose it loses all credibility. To be presidential, a president must practice presidentialism constantly, to the point that others have no choice but to view him as sincere. Obama has professed to regard George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as his models, but there is no indication that he has studied how either man conducted himself as president. They jealously guarded the dignity of the office; Obama is heedlessly frittering it away. ♦

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Neither Roosevelt nor Reagan

How Obama blew his opportunity

By Noemie Emery

When he signed the health care reform bill earlier this year, Barack Obama gave progressives the prize they had aimed at for seven-plus decades, an event they compared to the passage of civil rights and of Social Security. At the same time, he destroyed the best chance the Democrats had for enduring center-left governance since the mid 20th-century, shattered the coalition that brought him to power, and dealt his party and faction a political setback from which they may not recover for years.

Only a year ago, to hear the press tell it, Obama was that rare bird, a transformational figure, the new FDR or the left's Ronald Reagan. He was no mere presider—like the Bushes or Clinton—but a deliverer of major-league change. The alignments and mores of the past 30 years had been shattered; all that remained was to pick up the pieces and fashion them into a whole new mosaic that would run things for decades. Few doubted that this would be done.

Obama's chance for his new coalition came with the crash of September 2008, which dumped a windfall of independents, swing-voters, and softer Republicans into his and the Democrats' laps. While Republicans brawled for two weeks over the TARP financial bailout, and destroyed any sense they were fit to hold power, Obama stayed calm, projecting an unflappability that many mistook for assurance and competence. The economic crisis produced a political bonanza—the biggest presidential win for his party since its historic blowout in 1964 and a flood of congressional Democrats. The victory was wide, deep, and truly seemed national: Obama won more white males than Al Gore or John Kerry, he won back many straying conservative Democrats, he won independents by a 52-44 percent margin, and he won the "investor class" (people with incomes of $75,000 or over, and whose home values and stock holdings had been very hard hit) in the suburbs of cities in swing states, who tipped the red states of Ohio, Florida, Virginia, and North Carolina into his column.

For Obama, this windfall was an opportunity, but also a challenge, whose nature he never quite grasped. The opportunity was the chance to make his the national governing party; the challenge was that his voters weren't all that alike. All wanted change, but of different descriptions. The academic and metro-America liberals wanted a sharp departure from the Reagan-Bush policies. The swing voters sought relief from the partisan rows of the Clinton-Bush era. The first group wanted more partisanship, the second much less; the first was drawn by the progressive and left-wing agenda, the second by the small-c "conservative" temperament; the first wanted spending to cure the recession, the second thought the crash had been caused by over-extension, and moved in the direction of caution and thrift. The crash didn't convert the independents to the views of the liberal base, but it did give Obama a chance to address them, to make his case for a more communitarian approach, to claim that government could be a solution, if not to all problems, then to some. The country was due for a modest tilt to the left after years of conservative dominance, and the crash made a case for a change of direction. Aligning the base with the swing voters would have brought realignment. This never was tried.

Believing a crisis should never be wasted, Obama soon hit the ground spending, with a $787 billion stimulus program and the bailout or buyout of General Motors, coming on top of the TARP program earlier. This was his much touted Big Bang theory of statecraft—the belief that rapid-fire success would create trust in government. But Obama had misread the mood of many of his own voters, and the "trust" and "success" parts would fail to take hold. Public resistance had already emerged in the form of the anti-big-government rallies that came to be known as the Tea Party movement, but the administration dismissed them as fringe or mob actions, and pressed on to health care—dear to the heart of his base, not to the larger public—which Obama had pegged as the core of his program,

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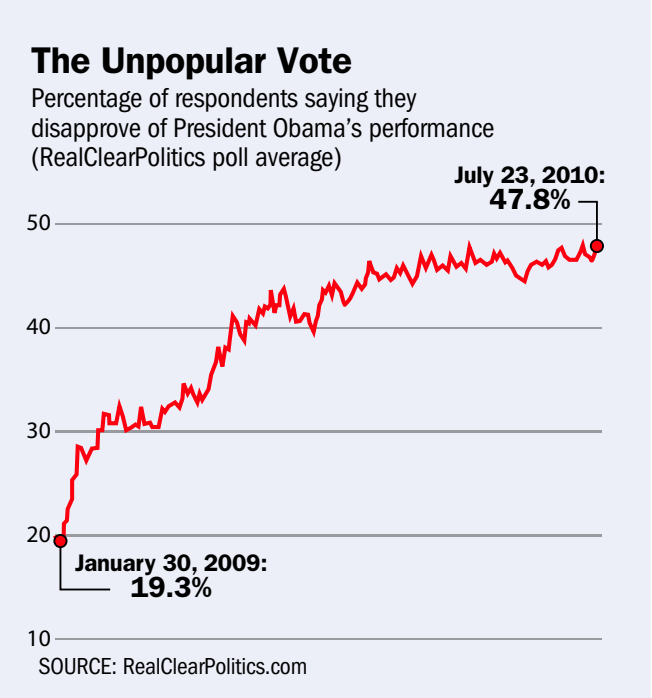
and the signature issue on which his success or his failure would turn. He turned the plan over to the Democratic leadership in Congress, which crafted a plan to make liberals happy. And this was his second mistake.

The coalition that elected Obama had always been split between two different elements—those who thought he was like Edmund Burke, and those who hoped he was like Robespierre; those moved by the progressive big ideas and those drawn by the pragmatic persona; those galvanized by the left-wing agenda and those who trusted in the "first-class temperament" extolled by Christopher Buckley and others to keep the agenda from going too far. It was at this point that the second group began having vapors, as the details of the plan(s) trickled out. To the extent that they wanted a health plan at all, moderates and swing voters wanted cost control, while Obamacare called for massive expansion of coverage; they wanted flexibility and additional choices, while Obamacare mandated fixed and elaborate levels of coverage; they were unnerved by the idea of adding more debt and taxes in the middle of what was still a recession, fears that the left did not share.

When the administration said its health plan would do more for less money no one believed them, and resistance grew. Support for the idea of reform started to slip steadily as the details were uncovered, with majorities believing the plan would erode the quality of medical services while increasing the cost. The more the administration explained it, the more the swing voters peeled off. "The crucial movement came between April and June, when the president's approval among independents fell by 15 percentage points, and the percentage of independents who regarded him as liberal or very liberal rose by 18," the *New York Times*'s David Brooks noted.

This was linked specifically to Obama's handling of health care, approval of which slipped from 57 percent to 49 percent in a fairly short period while disapproval rose from 29 percent to 44 percent. Disapproval would keep steadily rising, and the fact that independents, who had flocked to Obama in the fall of 2008, saw the term "liberal" as not user-friendly suggested they had gone with the temperament, not the agenda, and were starting to think they'd been had. Polls taken at the end of July and in early August 2009 found majorities had moved into firm opposition, which Obama's appeals had done nothing to stop. "The Obama team banked on the president's overwhelming personal popularity and aura of calm to make extreme and radical measures seem perfectly reasonable," wrote *Commentary*'s Jennifer Rubin. That assumption was "proving to not be the case."



When Democrats went home on recess in August, they were confronted at town halls by angry constituents, making members who months before thought they possessed an enduring majority suddenly fear for their seats. Heretofore depressed and divided, Republicans started to stir and to unify, seeing the polls and the protests as giving them traction and the health care bill in itself as a source of renewal, a target to aim at, and something all factions could hate. Elections coming up in the fall and the winter gained new importance: Democrats expected an easy win in the special election to fill the Senate seat of Ted Kennedy, but the two biggest tests—the governorships of Virginia and New Jersey, two critical states that had given big wins to Obama—began to take shape as referenda on health care, and on Obama's transformative theories of governance.

That this verdict would be in the negative began to emerge in October, when the *Washington Post* described the president for the first time as being a drag on his party, perhaps the reason that centrist Democrats in both houses had started to balk at his signature measure, and were insisting on major bribes before pledging their votes. On November 3, independents lowered the boom, electing Republican governors in both Virginia and New Jersey in a massive revolt of swing voters. When the House passed the bill later that week, it was by only five votes, with one-fifth of Democrats defecting. On Christmas Eve,

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Democrats pushed their health bill through the Senate on a series of deals designed to buy off recalcitrant members in states that had been Republican in recent elections: $300 million to Mary Landrieu in Louisiana, millions more to Bill Nelson in Florida; millions in exemptions from Medicaid to Nebraska's Ben Nelson ("The Stench of Victory," as the *Washington Post* put it). It was just after this that Republican Scott Brown, pledging to be "the 41st vote against health care," began to gain ground. On January 19 Brown won by 5 points, overcoming a 30-point lead once held by his rival, in a state that had gone by 26 points to Obama in 2008. Independents made up more than half of the vote in Massachusetts and in 2008 had gone nearly two-to-one for Obama; they now broke for Brown by a similar margin. A coalition for Obama of independents and Democrats had become a coalition against him of independents and Republicans. He built coalitions, but for the opposition party. And it had taken him only one year.

When Virginia's Bob McDonnell and New Jersey's Chris Christie won in November, Democrats had begun to get nervous; concern grew in December when Ben Nelson dropped 20 points, billions in pork for his state notwithstanding; and when Scott Brown pulled off his remarkable upset a genuine panic set in. "We're screwed," a Massachusetts congressman said to his caucus. Anxious moderates implored their leaders for caution. Another House Democrat said Harry Reid was a "loser," and that the party was "f—ed" if it didn't come to its senses and quit. Hearts sank when it became evident that the president and the leadership, unable to give up on the dream of a lifetime, were determined to push the health care bill through.

The moderates who came from swing districts were not happy when they were told by the White House, their leaders, and the liberal blogging community that it would be their honor and duty to lay down their political lives for the president, who made it clear that a failure to pass Obamacare would be a career-ending measure—for him. Frantic pleas from endangered Blue Dogs and centrists brought forth no balm from The One. "Obama's reply, in a nutshell: Sorry, Blanche," Charles Lane of the *Washington Post* summarized a session in which Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas "practically begged the president to repudiate 'extreme' liberals—a clear reference to the Nancy Pelosi-led House—and tack to the center." Lane was struck by "how easily he appeared to write off Lincoln politically, implying that her defeat was not only a foregone conclusion, but also an acceptable price to pay." (To Arkansas representative Marion Berry, who warned of a replay of the 1994 wipeout of congressional Democrats, Obama replied, "You've got me," ignoring the fact that his magic presence did nothing to help the opponents of McDonnell, Christie, or Brown to survive.) Nobody wanted to be the 216th vote against the bill, and face the wrath of the president and the congressional leadership, and no one wanted to be the 216th vote for it, and face the wrath of the voters back home. A Democrat who preferred to be nameless told the *Los Angeles Times*, "You almost couldn't design a vise more damaging to moderate Democrats—or that puts our majority more at risk."

Reagan and Roosevelt changed the country's laws and its politics, moving them both in one common direction. But while Obama is moving the law to the left, those laws are moving the politics hard in the other direction. Since Obama became president, everything that he wants has become more unpopular.

On March 21 the vise closed on the Democrats, as they squeezed out a win for Obamacare by seven votes. Senator Evan Bayh had announced his resignation in February; Michigan's Bart Stupak, who had voted yes under pressure, announced his in early April—opening up seats likely to go to Republicans. More retirements would follow. Much effort had gone in 2006 and 2008 into recruiting candidates who could run and win in red and swing states and districts in the endeavor to build a broad and deep base for the party. Those were precisely the members undermined by Obama's handiwork. The labor of years in trying to grow and establish a national party was gone.

What happened? Obama may have begun believing there was a coalition in place for the changes he wanted, but, for at least six different reasons, he and his friends were wrong. First, bad as it was, 2009 was no 1933, a perilous time when the country was not only strapped, but teetering on the raw edge of a social implosion. Second, Obama was no FDR, a political master who with one major exception—his court-packing plan after his 1936 landslide—had near-perfect pitch for what the country could take at each given moment, and seldom moved past these parameters. Third, when FDR became president, the crisis had already gone on for three years with no improvement; Obama's crisis had gone on for just four months, and the first steps to check it had already been taken. Fourth, this crash had been caused largely by

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leverage and debate, which made people averse to more borrowing and spending. Fifth, when FDR came on the scene, the country arguably was undergoverned, with few regulations, and no safety nets. In 2009, this was hardly the case. Sixth and last, FDR and his voters hadn't lived through a sorry decade like the 1970s, which had shown that while no regulation and no safety nets did not work well, too much of both didn't work either. If trust in markets was no longer unbounded, neither was trust in the state. Those 60-plus years of experience made a very big difference. The era of big government being over was a whole lot more durable than Obama had thought.

Had Obama really been FDR, this would not have surprised him, as transformative leaders are always in touch with their times. They also understand the basic rules of politics, which involve uniting your side while dividing the enemy, and bringing part of the enemy into your camp. They know that survival depends on keeping your base and swing voters in harness together, or so little dissatisfied that neither feels tempted or driven to leave. They know keeping independents on their side is the highest priority, as the votes of this bloc are on loan, not a given; and that while members of your base may stay home and sulk if you make them unhappy, independents will get out and vote for the opposite party, and you will lose two votes, and not one.

If a transformative leader had tried for health care—and FDR did not go for Social Security until his third year in office—he would have built the bill out from the center, in a way that held on to the unhappy left, appealed to the center, and became a wedge issue that split Republicans. As it was, Obama presented a bill drawn up by the left that became a wedge issue inside his own party, pitted the progressives against the Blue Dogs and centrists, set the moderates up for electoral slaughter, and forced several out in despair and exhaustion. His party is much weaker now than when he launched his agenda. And Republicans and the conservative movement have a whole new lease on life.

Transformative leaders, it goes without saying, seldom do things in this way. FDR passed Social Security in 1935 by a 372-33 vote margin in the House and 77-6 in the Senate; Reagan passed his tax cuts in 1981 by votes of 323-107 in the House, and 89-11 in the Senate. They not only passed their most ambitious bills, they built firm coalitions around and beneath them: Roosevelt aligned southern Bourbons with crypto-Communists, the segregationists with the civil rights movement, and dust bowl farmers with the children of ethnic urban immigrants. Reagan aligned fiscal conservatives with social conservatives and both with defense hawks who had been thrown out by the Democrats, aligned the country club Republicans with the movement conservatives, and pried the Reagan Democrats away from the party of Roosevelt. Obama came in with a coalition in embryo, handed to him by events not of his making, and threw it away in record time.

Reagan and Roosevelt changed the country's laws and its politics, moving them both in one common direction. But while Obama is moving the law to the left, those laws are moving the politics hard in the other direction. Since Obama became president, everything that he wants has become more unpopular: more intrusive and much bigger government, more taxing and spending, more state control. The *Wall Street Journal*'s Daniel Henninger cites a Pew Research Poll taken after the "victory" of Obamacare:

> After one year of the charismatic, ever-present Barack Obama, after passage of the party's totemic health care bill, after spending zillions . . . the American people . . . have the lowest opinion ever of national government. . . . A year ago, 54 percent said government should exert more control over the economy; a year later, it's 40 percent. Some 58 percent say Uncle Sam is interfering too much in state and local affairs. . . . A desire for smaller government is particularly evident since Barack Obama took office.

That's transformation! As Henninger concluded, "Barack Obama took a rising reservoir of public trust for his party . . . and emptied it." Gallup's annual Confidence in Institutions poll, conducted in the second week of July, showed that only 11 percent of Americans have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in Congress. "Half of Americans now say they have 'very little' or 'no' confidence in Congress, up from 38 percent in 2009—and the highest for any institution since Gallup first asked this question in 1973." Talk about change, if you care to. And as for health care, Obama's major achievement, when the bill passed, it was opposed by a 20-point spread by the general public, and since then it has only sunk lower. In some polls, around 60 percent of respondents say that they want it repealed.

Conventional wisdom says that this cannot be happening, but on this issue, conventional wisdom has often been wrong. Conventional wisdom said the public would like the bill once it had passed (it didn't); that the process by which it was passed wouldn't matter (it did); that the Democrats would get a boost in the polls for being "able to govern" (they didn't); and that Obama's approval ratings would go up on his strong show of leadership (as if). It also thought he would "put the issue behind him," and move on to other, more popular, measures. This hasn't occurred.

Obama's health care reform may live, it may die, or it may limp along in tatters, but it has already changed history: The prospect of an enduring center-left governing coalition, which a year ago seemed a distinct possibility, is now gone. ♦

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Fox's Nightowl

Greg Gutfeld, subversive

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

The Bible of Unspeakable Truths
by Greg Gutfeld
Grand Central, 304 pp., $24.99

When people close their eyes and think of Greg Gutfeld—more people do this than you might realize—they probably see a beefed-up dude dressed in Downtown black commanding the set of his own late-night TV show. When I close my eyes and think of Gutfeld, by contrast, I see a slenderer and much younger fellow with a thick head of tastefully moussed hair and a fifty-pound mail sack slung casually over his shoulder, hoping to impress the (female) interns and failing. How the Gutfeld of my memory—the wild man who ran the mail room at the *American Spectator*, where we both worked in the 1980s—became the much-fawned-over and much-reviled Gutfeld who hosts *Red Eye*, Fox News Channel's weirdest and coolest broadcast, is something I'll never be able to figure out.

In the introduction to his new book, Gutfeld refers to his "unique and somewhat perplexing career," so he can't figure it out, either. He came to the *Spectator* from UC Berkeley, which did not normally operate as a franchise in the *Spectator*'s farm system, and after he had mastered the trade of fielding faxes and slinging envelopes, he moved on to a series of magazine jobs that accelerated in importance and implausibility. At *Prevention*, Rodale's health-and-fitness bulletin, he once captioned an illustration with the deathless (to me, anyway) sentence: "Abs are this year's biceps." He went on to edit *Men's Health*, filling the office air with Marlboro smoke and frightening the natives. From there he became top dog at *Stuff*, then as now a girly mag designed to be read with one hand by pimply teenage boys.

Having grander ambitions, Gutfeld brought *Stuff* to grander heights, managing in the meantime to keep the teenagers sated—and in large numbers: Subscriptions increased by more than fifty percent under his editorship. The greatest of his achievements, though, was not specifically commercial, or even editorial. But it did get him fired. At a Manhattan gathering of magazine editors, held annually so they can award prizes to one another and ponder their indispensable contribution to the nation's cultural life, a panel discussion was convened on the topic of "Buzz"—how to get it, how to keep it, how to make it pay. Gutfeld hired three dwarves to attend the session, take seats in the front row, munch loudly from bags of potato chips, make calls on their cell phones, ridicule whatever the participants said, and break wind. The "buzz" that followed was teeth-rattling, but it was the wrong kind of buzz. He was fired from his next job, too, at *Maxim*, for running an article called "The Ikea Sex Party." I guess Ikea objected.

This isn't the usual professional path to an on-air job at Fox News—although if you told me that Sean Hannity once

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FOX NEWS

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wrote the words "Abs are the new biceps" I wouldn't fall over in a dead faint. (I wouldn't be shocked to learn that Bill O'Reilly had hired three dwarves once upon a time, either.) In the early days of the *Huffington Post*, Gutfeld briefly served as the house conservative blogger, and his inspired, lunatic ridicule of his leftwing fellow Huffers may have led Roger Ailes, the founding father of Fox News Channel, to hire him and give him a show. The larger question is how a man could be sufficiently elastic in his tastes to find both Greta van Susteren and Greg Gutfeld appealing. Maybe Ailes figured that because Gutfeld's show would air during the graveyard shift, at 3 A.M., the network didn't have much to lose. If the idea was to keep the show on the QT, however, it was a bad idea. Despite the absurd hour, *Red Eye* has acquired a large and intensely loyal audience, thanks in part to the magic of TiVo. I've met several Washingtonians who go to bed at a normal Washington bedtime—eight-thirty, nine—and watch the previous night's *Red Eye* while downing their GoLean the next morning.

Gutfeld himself has become a cult figure, which is why a legit publishing house like Grand Central has put out *The Bible of Unspeakable Truths*, a collection of his random writings—his *feuilletons*, as Gutfeld would never call them in a million years. Aside from the nightly interview with a talking copy of the *New York Times* and the earnest comments from the cherry-lipped lemon tarts brought in from the Fox newsroom, the highlight of *Red Eye* is usually the "Gregalogue," a 90-second editorial, or rant, in which the host takes off after whatever news item or personage has annoyed him that day. Many Gregalogues are reprinted here, in revised, unexpurgated form, and only a handful would be appropriate for quotation in a Books & Arts section like this one. It turns out that George Carlin was wrong: There are more than seven words you can't say on television, and they're all here.

A lot of readers will object to some of these pieces—well, many of these pieces—most, actually—on grounds of aesthetics or taste. It's worth mentioning, in rebuttal, that Gutfeld's stuff is also an artifact of a degraded era. If the *Atlantic Monthly*, the magazine of William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, and E.B. White, can serve as a platform from which its senior editor writes—candidly!—of a "final orgasm that drained every last drop of desire or need from my body," surely the conservative movement can tolerate a writer who toys in public with the idea of going to Thailand as a sex tourist. At least the conservative guy is joking.

Gutfeld's conservatism is mostly negative—his catalogue of dislikes ranges from Doonesbury to Mensa to any tattoo not found on a longshoreman—but it's not nihilistic. Flip it over and you'll find a cogent, nontraditional defense of traditional wisdom. The closest he comes to a statement of principles is this:

> We're living in an age where our innate common sense—our gut instinct—is constantly being called into question. Those things you know to be right—family, morality, objective truth, guns, faces that are free of nose rings and tongue studs—are seen as stupid, outdated, signs of a dead era. This book seeks to give you confidence in knowing that what you know is actually the only thing worth knowing.

Then he makes a joke about Tom Sizemore and bathrooms.

Gutfeld is often referred to as a conservative/libertarian version of Jon Stewart and Bill Maher. The comparison to Maher, an idiot, is an insult to Gutfeld, but Stewart's style and skill bring him nearer the mark. As a conservative, the host of *Red Eye* doesn't enjoy the limitless slack given the host of the *Daily Show*, who can flatter his audience, reaffirm their hidden assumptions, grovel before preferred presidential candidates, and still manage to be labeled daring and even subversive, a real teller of truth-to-power. Gutfeld's stuff actually is subversive, a stink bomb hurled into every faculty lounge, mainstream newsroom, movie studio, and nonprofit boardroom in America. He's the most dangerous man on television. And unlike Stewart, he writes his own material. ♦

B&A

Primate Primer

Uneasy lies the head of the Anglican Communion.

BY MARK TOOLEY

The Church of England, at least as mother of the global Anglican Communion's 70 million adherents, currently faces what may be its greatest crisis since the 17th century's struggles with Puritan revolt. That last crisis focused on political authority; the current one is about sex. Episcopalians demand acceptance for openly homosexual clergy and same-sex unions. African Anglican bishops, whose flocks now outnumber dwindling British and American churches, insist that Scripture remains authoritative. Some conservative Episcopalians have formed a new Anglican Church in North America that seeks to sit alongside, or possibly displace, the Episcopal Church in the global Anglican Communion. The Church of England, with support from its archbishop of Canterbury, has affirmed the Anglican Church's desire to remain in the communion.

Rowan's Rule
The Biography of the Archbishop of Canterbury
by Rupert Shortt
Eerdmans,466 pp., $30

That archbishop of Canterbury is Rowan Williams, a Welsh former Presbyterian who is the 104th priest to fill England's oldest bishopric. His biogra-

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pher, journalist Rupert Shortt, himself a former student of Williams's, hails his onetime teacher as possibly the greatest British cleric since St. Anselm a thousand years ago. Critics may wonder if Williams is more akin to another predecessor, Archbishop William Laud, whom the Puritan-controlled Parliament beheaded for his royalism and alleged popery.

Not long ago I briefly met Rowan Williams and attended a speech where he fully lived up to expectations: Tall, bewhiskered, erudite, personable, and somewhat befuddled by the multiple controversies swirling around him, he would undoubtedly be a brilliant and accomplished academic, theologian, poet, spiritual mentor, and mystic. But does he have what it takes to prevent further Anglican schism?

Williams himself has a liberal bent: Before becoming archbishop he indicated support for ordaining active homosexuals, and after becoming archbishop, he initially supported the elevation to bishop of an English homosexual priest who may or may not have been celibate, until controversy forced the priest to step aside. For most of his tenure since 2003, Williams has opposed acceptance of homosexual bishops and same-sex rites, in deference to the global Anglican Communion, most of it now in the Global South and strongly opposed to Western sexual mores. Some liberals have felt betrayed. Many conservatives are exasperated by his sometimes reluctant affirmation of historic Christian teaching.

Centrists in America and Britain have sometimes hailed Rowan Williams for trying to steer the communion towards consensus. His biographer is among them. He accurately points out that Williams is not a 20th-century theological modernist, like the tediously controversial retired Newark bishop John Shelby Spong, who regaled 1980s television talk shows with speculations about whether the Virgin Mary was a prostitute. Williams affirms theologically orthodox stances about the virgin conception and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He came of age with and is close to his fellow Anglican bishop and theologian N.T. Wright, a favorite of American evangelicals for his scholarly rebuttal of Jesus Seminar revisionism.

Many British and American centrists dream of a new Anglican consensus that is theologically orthodox while modernist on sex issues. For them, Williams is a *beau idéal*. For conservatives in the United States, impatient with the Episcopal Church's implosion, and for Africans indignant over compromise on Scripture, Williams seems to be a feckless ditherer. Williams himself does not convey great hope about an ultimate solution, once likening Anglican divisions over sex to the intractable conflict between Israel and Arabs. At times he seems to imply that the Communion should retain orthodox teachings on sex until conservatives have time to change and join a new consensus. The demographics of shrinking liberal dioceses and growing conservative dioceses, especially in Africa, make this vision unlikely.

Serving only briefly as a parish priest, Rowan Williams was primarily an academic before becoming bishop of Monmouth, then archbishop of Wales, before his appointment as archbishop of Canterbury. He thinks and speaks like a professor grappling with a smorgasbord of arguments. Sometimes he discerns endless complexity where simplicity and clear leadership might be preferable. The controversies he has ignited on nonsexual issues have often been unnecessary, generated by his intellectual yearning for nuance.

To paraphrase Pascal, the God of philosophers and scholars is not necessarily the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Williams once told the BBC at Christmastime that much of the traditional nativity story is untrue. (He was referring to the snowy mangers and talking animals of popular lore.) But the media—not unreasonably, though inaccurately—assumed he was questioning traditional Christians' beliefs about the virgin birth, singing angels, and wise men. When the Church of England voted to divest from Caterpillar Inc. for doing business with Israel, Williams heartily endorsed the gesture, not anticipating any controversy. Within only a few days he and the Church had to backtrack, facing criticism not only from British Jews but much of the media and Williams's predecessor, Archbishop George Carey. His implied endorsement of certain aspects of *sharia* law in Britain excited even greater condemnation, though Williams insisted he was only defending Muslims' freedom to submit voluntarily to Islamic-guided contracts. He was, at least momentarily, the least popular man in Britain, he later moaned.

Political statements from Williams, who was appointed by Tony Blair, usually seem conventionally left-wing: He is sharply critical of globalization and free markets, very concerned about global warming, and outspokenly opposed to the Iraq war. He wants nuclear disarmament, though he is unsure how to get there and largely ignores his own theological warnings against utopianism. During the 1980s he protested at American military bases in Britain.

And yet, despite Williams's outspokenness on a wide range of political and theological issues, he is not naturally comfortable with public disputations. Even his admiring biographer admits to Williams's discomfort with the public eye on his "sometimes tortuous prose, his well-meaning but not always astute pronouncements on economic policy or *sharia* law, and even of the (absurd as well as false) rumor that he had attended orgies as a student in Oxford during the 1970s." Shortt notes that detractors see Williams's account of core doctrine "lost in a fog of equivocation" and Shortt grants that some of Williams's work is "under-edited and unduly mystifying."

Shortt insists that Williams's enormous intellect more than compensates for these failures to communicate with brevity, contrasting him with his supposedly less brainy predecessor George Carey, whose "contribution to intellectual debate was trifling." But is an archbishop of Canterbury's vocation chiefly to foster debate, or to lead his flock? Shortt indirectly admits that Williams may be out of place in his public role: As a student he was academically "faultless" but "shy" and "loved seclusion." He considered monasticism, and even Roman Catholicism, but ultimately

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pursued ordination in the Church of England. He thrived as a teacher, but as a pastor and bishop he was not always comfortable making hard decisions.

Despite Williams's introversion, he is a magnetic man and has always attracted followers. One admirer from his academic days recalls him as "scintillating," emitting an "aura," and exuding a "great white light." A female fan, early in his academic career, committed suicide, apparently distraught that her admiration was not reciprocated. A male admirer likens his presence to an "arena of prayer." A colleague fondly remembers that Williams was a "holy man" who was "sometimes a little in the clouds" and would cite "Gilbert and Sullivan" when preaching to a congregation likely to be unaware of late Victorian comic operas. Another colleague has warned, "Don't worry about his radicalism. Watch for his romanticism." Shortt himself thinks Williams may be more "tenderhearted" than a good judge of character. One liberal editorial cheered Williams's appointment to Canterbury: "He is a prophet and theologian. He is not a 'safe' man. If Tony Blair decides to hitch his wagon to the American star and back an attack on Saddam Hussein, Rowan Williams is unlikely to be found cheering him on." Another commentator noted that Williams's appointment had "squashed the ambitions of an evangelical lobby which reflects the prejudices of the developing world, not cosmopolitan London."

After his accession, Williams tried to mollify critics concerned about his liberalism. "I have always been committed to the Church's traditional teaching on sex before marriage," he insisted, not entirely accurately. For better or worse, Williams is sometimes guilty of "carefully judged unclarity." Shortt describes his "flair for seeing both sides of an argument" and Williams himself has been frustrated by the way his public comments are often received, likening it to speaking to the hard of hearing, admitting that his attempts are sometimes "stumbling" and "clotted" because the "subject matter isn't wrestled to the ground very easily."

If Rowan Williams's penchant for intellectual pontification can sometimes confuse Anglican audiences, the confusion is likely more intense among non-English-speaking Anglicans in the Global South. Shortt accurately describes African Anglicans as uninterested in Western biblical criticism, having self-confidently "digested Christian teaching in situations closer to the Old and New Testaments than to those of contemporary Europeans or North Americans." But he is dismissive of senior African prelates such as the Nigerian archbishop Peter Akinola, whom he derides as "crass" and a "bigot." The recently retired bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, an ethnic Pakistani and prominent critic of Islam who was an alternative candidate for the job Williams got, is "lacking in social graces and unduly ambitious." Breakaway conservative bishops in America are described as manipulative.

Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Rowan Williams, 2009

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VATICAN POOL / GETTY IMAGES

Shortt emphasizes Williams's forbearance with his conservative fellow Anglicans. And it is true that Williams has been anxious to keep American conservatives within the global Anglican fold, even arousing liberal criticism in the process. How gracious he has been with conservative African prelates is more debatable. At times he has been seen to be condescending to them, although Shortt prefers to attribute tensions exclusively to aggressive Africans such as Akinola. Impatient Africans have even questioned the primacy of the archbishop of Canterbury: "Must I come to Lambeth Palace in order to go to heaven?" the Nigerian bishop once asked. "The answer is no!"

Shortt commends Williams's critique of U.S. foreign policy under George W. Bush, but thinks he underplays the threat posed by jihadist Islam. Williams was actually very near the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, but later wrote a short book that seemed, in places, to sympathize with the terrorists' anxiety as powerless victims. Shortt admits the shortcomings of Williams's appeals for post-9/11 "forgiveness" and wonders how such pleas apply to state conflict. During the Danish cartoon episode, Williams publicly empathized with Muslim complaints that their "convictions" were not treated sufficiently "seriously." Shortt describes Williams's speech about the "inevitable" adoption of *sharia* law in Britain as demonstrating his "cleverness" but also his lack of "capacity to see how his words would be received." Williams's interview with a British Muslim magazine excited British headlines when it quoted him by proclaiming the United States to be the world's "worst" imperialist. He contrasted the British Empire, which poured "energy and resources" into its colonies, with the American preference for a "quick burst" of "violent action" to clear the decks, leaving others to tidy the mess.

Shortt's depiction of Rowan Williams suffering, martyrlike, for the salvation of the fracturing Anglican Communion is appealing, if not persuasive. The Church of England and the Anglican Communion need a strong helmsman. Its current primate is thoughtfully uncertain about his direction. He inspires sympathy, and sometimes admiration, but not necessarily confidence. ♦

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B&A

Free to Choose

The 70-30 solution to the new culture war.

BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

Arthur Brooks thinks we're in for a new culture war. While we used to "fight over guns, abortion, religion, and gays," our future battle is a struggle between "free enterprise and big government." He casts his lot with free enterprise and argues that 70 percent of Americans do so as well. The problem is that a coalition of 30 percent prowls the halls of power in America and is working to undo 200 years of American exceptionalism, and they're focused on co-opting the young to their side.

The Battle
How the Fight Between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future
by Arthur C. Brooks
Basic Books, 192 pp., $23.95

The Battle is an attempt to inoculate the young and reassure the rest of America that the free enterprise system is both economically and morally superior to its alternatives. An accomplished social scientist—formerly at Syracuse, now president of the American Enterprise Institute—Brooks is uniquely qualified to write this sort of book. The result is jam-packed with facts and figures—the endnotes alone comprise a fifth of the total—sufficient to show that entrepreneurship, economic liberty, and market economies make the most sense, not only in theory but in practice. This attention to both ideas and their consequences is the book's greatest strength.

Brooks begins with his thesis that America is a 70-30 nation, and that the current battle between free enterprise and statism is a battle for its very soul. Grounding his argument in the Founding Fathers, he argues that free enterprise is about empowering people to pursue their own goals, to realize their dreams. Protection of private property, natural rights, and limited constitutional government are at the service of these ends. Political and economic freedom go hand in hand. And Americans know this—or, at least two-thirds of us do. Brooks marshals an impressive array of survey data to show that the vast majority of Americans "prefer capitalism over socialism." Even if less charged terms are used in the questioning, when it comes to markets, taxes, business, and government, we prefer freedom.

The survey data seem meant to reassure Americans that they're not alone, and to convince politicians that support for the free enterprise system is a winning platform. But why would these people need reassuring and convincing? Because of the 30 percent coalition, "led by people who are smart, powerful, and strategic," who "make opinions, entertain us, inform us, and teach our kids in college." While the rest of America has moved to the right since the 1970s, the intellectual aristocracy has not. And Brooks sees three broad strategies that they're using to bring people under 30 to their side: They're paying off their debts (especially college loans), giving them government jobs, and structuring the tax system so that they'll never pay much of anything.

Having painted the basic political-demographic picture, Brooks then shows how the 30 percent are mischaracterizing the financial crisis to remake American political and economic policy. As Brooks sees it, the "Obama Narrative about the financial crisis" contains the following five claims: Government wasn't the primary cause of the crisis; government understands the causes and solutions; Main Street was just an unwitting victim; government expansion and deficit spending are the only solutions; middle-class Americans won't pay for this, only the rich will pay.

On each count, as Brooks persuasively argues, the Obama Narrative is profoundly wrong. He presents the genuine causes and long-term solutions as deftly as he destroys the left's story. Even so, Brooks insists that while it is true that "losing the culture struggle to the 30 percent coalition will make us poorer in money," this is not the argument to make. At the heart of his defense of the free enterprise system is "the pursuit of happiness." He turns the tables on liberals, arguing that their conception of state and economy is "fundamentally materialistic" while his is altogether moral. The 30 percent think that "money buys happiness," so that "spreading the wealth around" is the only fair thing to do. This explains why redistribution of income, for equality's sake, is their "fundamental goal."

But Brooks has a richer understanding of happiness—or "human flourishing," as he calls it—grounded in his prior research and social science: "People flourish when they earn their own success." And it's only a country that supports a free-enterprise system that allows people to earn their own success. Happiness suffers when we treat the poor as wards of the state and when we prohibitively tax and regulate entrepreneurs trying to make something for themselves. Sifting through the data, Brooks shows that "inequality is not what makes people unhappy," and that for all but the poorest nations, "raising the average income won't raise the life satisfaction of the citizenry." Free enterprise is "not just the most efficient system; it's the most fair and the most just."

Earned success leads to true happiness, and the free enterprise system makes this possible for three key rea-

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sons: optimism, meaning, and control over our lives. Living in a free enterprise society means that we have the possibility of earning success and have hope for the future. Being free to develop our talents and take risks in our careers allows us to find meaning in our daily lives. And this same freedom gives us control over our lives and the sense of fulfillment that this brings.

In some campaign advice for wise politicians, Brooks closes with a five-pronged argument for any future defense of free enterprise. First, "the purpose of free enterprise is human flourishing, not materialism." Second, America is for equality of opportunity, not equality of income, and the free enterprise system best promotes and protects this type of equality. Third, rather than treating poverty as an isolated cancer (which inevitably leads to dependency and cyclical poverty), we should aim to stimulate true prosperity for all. Fourth, America is and should be promoted as a gift to the world. And fifth, what matters is principle, not power, and standing by principle will often require refusing to expand one's power.

While *The Battle* will be effective in its way, it is unlikely to convince those not already inclined to agree with its author. The problem is that no single liberal is likely to see himself in Brooks's depiction of liberals. Liberals aren't necessarily materialists, and they aren't necessarily for redistribution for its own sake. Most think that material wealth is important precisely to secure the conditions for earned success. They emphasize redistribution because they think the poor are too poor to have the opportunity of earning success, which justifies taking from the rich to help the poor.

That may be why so many people belong to both the 70 and 30 percent coalitions, rendering Brooks's dichotomy less hard and fast than he may suppose. As Philip Converse showed a half-century ago, the public is not terribly consistent in its values, and polls aren't terribly accurate in capturing them. There is likely more overlap between the 70 and the 30 than Brooks perceives. Reversing the usual trend for free-market adherents, he tries to do too much with the moral argument at the expense of the pragmatic one. And even for one (like me) who agrees with him that economic freedom facilitates the earned success so important to our happiness, some questions remain. Much economic truth is counterintuitive, and someone straddling the divide between the 70 and 30 will want to know precisely how government interference in the market hinders earned success, and what we should do about those who fail to provide for themselves. ♦

B&A

Tragedy at Sea

Military tribunals, 18th-century style.

BY JOSEPH F. CALLO

'The Shooting of Admiral Byng onboard the Monarque' (1757)

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / EVERETT COLLECTION

In 1757 Admiral John Byng of the Royal Navy was executed by firing squad on the quarterdeck of HMS *Monarque*. He wasn't shot because he lost a battle, betrayed his country, or committed an act of cowardice under fire. He was shot because he failed to achieve a victory in a naval action against the French, and particularly because he was indecisive and passive in the battle's aftermath.

Following the execution, Voltaire remarked sardonically that the British "shoot an admiral from time to time to encourage the others." But there was much more to the event than that, and in *Admiral Byng* Chris Ware illuminates the complicated military and political circumstances of this story of an otherwise unremarkable officer whose career ended in a seemingly bizarre act.

Admiral Byng
His Rise and Execution
by Chris Ware
Penn & Sword, 224 pp., $39.99

Ware sets up some of the incongruities of the narrative at the end of his prologue:

> It was not treason that brought Byng to his execution. . . . it was both devastatingly simple and, at the same time, far more complex than that. What brought him down was the one

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thing which could destroy any British admiral: failure to defeat the enemy in battle.

It occurs to the reader, however, that even in the eighteenth century failure in battle might lead to being relieved of command and even cashiered from the service—but not to a ceremonial death by firing squad. Ware tells the story in detail—how the peculiar execution came to pass—and he tells it with the insights of a lecturer, author, and former curator of Britain's National Maritime Museum.

John Byng was born in 1704, the son of Admiral Viscount George Byng, who became an admiral of the fleet and was first lord of the admiralty from 1727 to 1733. There was little doubt that John Byng was headed for a career in the Royal Navy, and he entered that service in 1718. After an undistinguished early career, he advanced to rear admiral in 1745, vice admiral in 1747, and admiral in 1756. He was not a brilliant naval leader, but neither were there serious blemishes on his record. He managed generally to avoid the least attractive assignments during his career, and he had no more than his expected share of brushes with higher authority, both political and naval. He was in many ways typical of the numerous well-connected officers who achieved the rank of post captain, and then advanced inexorably to flag rank in the Royal Navy of the day.

Byng's career took an ominous turn in March 1756, however, when he was appointed to command a 10-ship squadron with troops embarked and ordered to the Mediterranean. It was clear, in Byng's orders, that a crucial element of his deployment was the protection of Minorca, a linchpin of British naval power in the Mediterranean. A key phrase in his orders was this: "If you find any attack made upon that island [Minorca] by the French you are to use all possible means in your power for its relief."

After considerable delay, including significant problems in manning his ships, Byng arrived in Gibraltar at the beginning of May. There he learned that the French had already invaded Minorca and were in control of the island, with the exception of Fort St. Philip at the port of Mahon. Byng was faced with a situation that he had not anticipated. Instead of reinforcing the British defense of Minorca against a potential attack, a mostly tactical challenge, he was faced with a question with broad strategic implications. Should he support the garrison at Mahon, even if that support was likely to fail, or should he write off Minorca and use his squadron in other ways against the French? It was a question of broad strategy, the likes of which he had not confronted previously.

He clearly believed that he was innocent of misconduct, and he never wavered from that position. Nor did he question the prerogatives of his civilian masters to sit in judgment of his actions or, in his case, his thought processes.

Even beyond his shortage of experience, Byng had a personality that was no match for the challenge. Ware describes those inadequacies candidly: "Byng was fussy, which might come across as dithering, and he also wrote in an orotund style." In addition, Ware quotes an evaluation by Julian Corbett, the British maritime strategist: "He was not a man for a doubtful enterprise where so much must turn on a capacity for prompt resolution and fearlessness of responsibility."

On May 20, Byng's moment in history arrived. After sighting a French squadron off the coast of Minorca, a battle was joined. The opposing forces were equal, and once engaged, neither side was able to gain a clear advantage. During the action Byng demonstrated neither exceptional tactical skill nor aggressiveness, and it was clear that his captains had not been briefed about their commander's intentions prior to the action. Confounding the issue were the navy's "Sailing and Fighting Instructions," which provided little help in the basic command-and-control challenges of combat at sea during the Age of Sail. The instructions were not conducive to aggressive tactics, and confusion and tentativeness marked the British squadron's performance. As darkness approached, the French force bore away. There was some damage inflicted by both sides, but there was no decisive result: Byng did not pursue the French squadron—and for that he would pay, not with censure or ignominy, but with his life.

Confronted with a challenging tactical situation and serious strategic implications, which Byng appeared to be overlooking, he called for a council of war among his captains and a number of the senior army officers involved. It was a common reaction for the time; but nearly 50 years later Admiral Nelson would be instructive on the subject of war councils when he wrote to his prime minister: "For if a man consults whether he is to fight, when he has the power in his own hands, it is certain that his opinion is against fighting."

As it turned out, Byng's war council voted unanimously that there was no prospect of relieving the garrison at Fort St. Philip, and that Gibraltar would be endangered if Byng's squadron was to suffer further damage. Byng returned to Gibraltar. When word of the eventual surrender of the British force holding the last British bastion on Minorca, and Byng's return to Gibraltar, reached Britain, a political and press firestorm was ignited. As Ware explains, "Gibraltar was important, but Minorca was vital. . . . Lose Minorca and the law of unintended consequences came into play." It was a circumstance that threatened the government, as well as the Royal Navy's leaders at the Admiralty—and for good reason. It was their planning and policies, more than Byng's lack of aggressiveness, that had led to strategic disaster, and it is on this aspect of the story that Ware's knowledge of British political history is particularly important.

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A squadron was quickly formed and sent out to reinforce the Navy in the Mediterranean. Byng and many of the officers in his squadron were relieved and returned to England, where Byng was immediately placed under arrest, and preparations for his court martial began.

Byng's position was extremely dangerous. While imprisoned initially in the Tower of London, and subsequently at the Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich, it was difficult for him to mount a legal defense, and no one in the government or the Admiralty facilitated matters for him. He was, after all, the lightning rod for blame that could easily have fallen upon them. The forces arrayed against Byng were overwhelming, ranging from George II to the king's ministers to the Admiralty to the press. And unfortunately for him, he had no anchor to windward in any of those places.

What resulted was a trial conducted in strict accordance with Britain's Articles of War of 1749 but moved inexorably towards a conviction. Ware describes the proceedings bluntly: "Whatever the circumstances it was obvious that this was a show trial . . . and a show trial in the sense that the ministry of whatever composition had to be seen to be doing something." When the court martial ended, Byng stood convicted of violating a critical article: "Every person who through cowardice or negligence or disaffection shall in action withdraw or keep back or not come into the fight or engagement or shall not do his utmost to take or destroy every ship which be his duty to engage . . . shall suffer death."

It was the requirement to "do his utmost" that led to his doom.

Byng's legal defense failed, as his action against the French fleet at Minorca had failed; but he pursued it with resolution and a sense that his impending sacrifice was inevitable. He clearly believed that he was innocent of misconduct, and notwithstanding the odds stacked against him, he never wavered from that position. Nor did he question the prerogatives of his civilian masters to sit in judgment of his actions or, in his case, his thought processes.

When the smoke from the Royal Marines' muskets drifted off *Monarque*'s quarterdeck, and the corpse of John Byng was removed, there were doubtless sighs of relief from George II and in Whitehall and at the Admiralty. But there was something else as well, something more permanent: the realization that Admiral John Byng was clearly more than a mediocre flag officer. He was someone who, by the quality of his response to his accusers, endorsed a concept that is a given in those societies based on representative governments: civilian control of the military. ♦

'Shadow of the Boat' by Joaquin Sorolla (1903)

SCALA / WHITE IMAGES / ART RESOURCE

B&A

Art of Madrid

The lesser-known wonders of the Spanish capital.

BY MARK FALCOFF

Madrid

Visitors here almost invariably make the Prado Museum their first destination, and rightly so: It is one of the finest collections in the world, beautifully mounted and remarkably accessible. As Ernest Hemingway once quipped, people are surprised to see the Prado's famous canvases "right there. . . . They get their money's worth in Italy where the museums are rarely open and when they are, the paintings are poorly lit and placed well above eye level." But the Spanish capital is also home to a number of smaller collections that are all but unknown to foreign art lovers. To reach them you need only a good city map and a ticket on Madrid's excellent underground railroad, the Metro.

Joaquin Sorolla (1863-1923) was one of the leading Spanish painters of his day, known for his representations of gardens and seascapes. In fact, however, he was a remarkably versatile artist whose work included portraits of important personalities, stylistically somewhat similar to the work of his Anglo-American contemporary John

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Singer Sargent. His home and studio are now open to the public, and the rooms are full of examples of his work. Apart from the paintings, the house with its stunning Andalusian patio affords visitors a chance to see how a successful professional lived in Spain during the period around the First World War. Tiffany lamps, Art Deco furniture, and ubiquitous Spanish tiles provide a charming setting. Sitting on one table is an inscribed photograph of President William Howard Taft, who had sat for the artist in Washington; on another is a photograph of King Alfonso XIII, a personal friend, with a witticism inscribed at the bottom ("What do you think of the lighting here?"). Perhaps most interesting are the murals in the upstairs bedrooms which are rough drafts for those which Sorolla executed for the Hispanic Society of America in New York.

José Lázaro Galdiano (1862-1947) was a cultured Spanish gentleman who, together with his wealthy Argentine wife Paula Florido y Toledo, accumulated one of the great private collections of Spain during the interwar period. After his death it was bequeathed in its entirety to the state. Housed in what was once his grand town mansion, it stuns the visitor with the quality and quantity of the items, as well as the huge range of the collector's tastes. The holdings range from small bronzes and reliquaries to exquisite pieces of French furniture, from weaponry to ancient coins. The most important acquisitions, however, are the paintings—not just Flemish, English, and Dutch works, but a truly remarkable collection of Spanish paintings from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. An entire room is devoted to works by Goya, including frequently reproduced scenes known collectively as *Las Brujas* (*The Witches*). This museum is, in fact, so heavily laden with riches that, like the Prado, it deserves repeated visits.

Several of the smaller museums are currently closed to visitors for ongoing renovations. These include the Museo del Romanticismo, the Museo Municipal (now renamed Museo de Historia de Madrid), and Museo Cerralbo. Their future availability to visitors is uncertain, but prospective travelers should keep them in mind as they may reopen at any time. The first was the home of Don Benigno de la Vega-Inclán, founder of the country's network of *paradores*, that is, state-owned luxury hotels. In addition to its ballroom and grand salon, it is famous for a collection of *costumbrista* paintings that depict everyday life in Andalusia and Madrid, often showing local festivals and traditions. The Museo Municipal is currently swathed in canvas while crews renovate the building beneath; the authorities have commissioned a reproduction of its baroque façade on the surface of the fabric so that visitors will have some idea of what lies beneath. The collection is rich in maps of Madrid, as well as a model of the capital as it appeared in about 1830. The Museo Cerralbo is a magnificent palace—complete with mirrored ballroom, crystal chandeliers and wrought-iron balustrades—situated on a quiet street not far off the city's busy Gran Vía. Like the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, it is home to major Spanish paintings, including El Greco's *The Ecstasy of Saint Francis*, along with works by Ribera, Zurbarán, and Goya.

One can only wish the renovators godspeed in their work. ♦

B&A

Head Shots

A nightmare about real and imaginary dreams.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Inception is about people who can enter the dreams of others to find out their secrets and manipulate them. These people design a series of three dreams stacked within each other like Russian dolls inside the mind of an industrialist. The dreams must come to an end simultaneously for the scheme to work. The climaxes of the dreams are engineered to be literally startling—each is intended to shock the dreamer into rousing, and the dreamer needs to rouse from the deepest sleep into the second deepest into the lightest and then into wakefulness. And at each dream level, time moves at a different speed.

Inception
Directed by Christopher Nolan

This is as ingenious a science-fiction setup as I can remember. Indeed, *Inception* is, in many ways, the fulfillment of the promise of all previous I-am-going-to-enter-your-unconscious movies—from the ridiculous Hitchcock-Dali collaboration *Spellbound* in 1945 to the intermittently thrilling *Brainstorm* in 1983 to the terrifying original *Nightmare on Elm Street* and the ham-handed *Dreamscape* in 1984 and on to the amusingly twisty Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle *Total Recall* in 1990. The writer-director Christopher Nolan has seen them all, borrowed liberally from them all, and improved on every one of their schematic premises. Wisely, he doesn't bother with explaining how they get into people's heads. He's interested in what happens when they do it.

Nolan has set the whole thing up as a corporate-espionage plot. Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) leads a team of "extractors," who travel the globe trying to get things out of the heads of CEOs. The extractors ask the dreamers about the location of a vault or a safe because, in the logic of a dream, once a dreamer thinks of a vault, he will immediately stash his greatest secrets in it. The extractors then have to figure out a way to find the vault and break into it before the dreamer figures

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out he is dreaming and the dream state itself crumbles around all of them.

In Nolan's world, these CEOs know extractors exist and they receive training in protecting themselves through dream-state countermeasures. They are taught how to use unconscious defenses that manifest themselves in dreams as gun-toting guardians against interlopers.

Now Cobb needs to move from "extraction" to "inception"—the planting of an idea within the brain of a dreamer. It's a paradoxically complicated thing to do, because the dreamer needs to be tricked into thinking the idea is his own. Thus, the idea has to be very simple, and needs to be planted in the deepest part of his unconscious.

If I were 12 years old, I would think *Inception* was the most profound exploration of the paradoxes of reality ever committed to celluloid. But alas, I am 49, and my problem with *Inception* is that, while I enjoyed the fiendishly clever though often inscrutable way Nolan assembled his $160 million puzzle, the movie is remote and chilly. That is a strange emotional temperature for a movie about dreaming, because whatever dreams may be, they are the farthest thing from chilly.

The effects that will have audiences enthralled come not from the exploration of the feelings generated by the dreams we see—something movies are actually pretty good at, especially when dealing with nightmares—but from the way a team learns how to distort reality inside a dream.

Thus, a Paris streetscape bends in on itself like an Escher painting in the movie's signature shot. It's wonderful to look at, but it's more like what can happen with a very good program for your MacBook Pro rather than the bizarre leaps of a dream. Similarly, the dreams themselves are surprisingly linear: They're a series of action-movie chases, beautifully done but not all that different from movie chases in general. And since the movie is about unconscious emotions and how they control us, it suffers from having two entirely clichéd and witless conflicts at its heart: One paint-by-numbers guilt over a dead wife (the exact same guilt DiCaprio had to display in his last movie, *Shutter Island*) and the other an off-the-rack Oedipal struggle.

Above, Joseph Gordon-Levitt; below, Leonardo DiCaprio and Cillian Murphy

STEPHEN VAUGHAN

More troubling, *Inception* suffers from an enraging major flaw—a muddy soundtrack and the casting of a Japanese actor in a crucial part whose English is nearly indecipherable. As a result of its sound weaknesses and the imprecise vocal stylings of Ken Watanabe, several crucial scenes featuring dialogue that explains the extremely complicated action unfolding before us are impossible to follow. It would be as though, in a mystery novel, the type on the page were covered with blotches of ink just as the police inspector was saying, "And the killer is. . . . "

The movie is otherwise so carefully rendered that I am almost inclined to believe Nolan deliberately obscured the sound to get fanboys and other obsessives to see it over and over again just so they can make sense out of the action. But that would be a lunatic corporate profit-seeking conspiracy theory of exactly the sort we see at work in *Inception*, now, wouldn't it? ♦

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"[Actress] Lindsay Lohan reported to court today and was ordered to begin serving her 90-day jail sentence for probation violation"
—CNN.com, July 20, 2010

PARODY

On My Mind Lindsay Lohan

The movie star and power shopper tells us what she can't live without

Obsessed with...
trying to get out of this [expletive] [expletive]-hole.

Happy I bought...
the new iPhone 4—not that I ever use it. One of my fellow inmates asked to borrow it and when I asked for it back, she just laughed at me. She also complains her calls keep getting dropped.

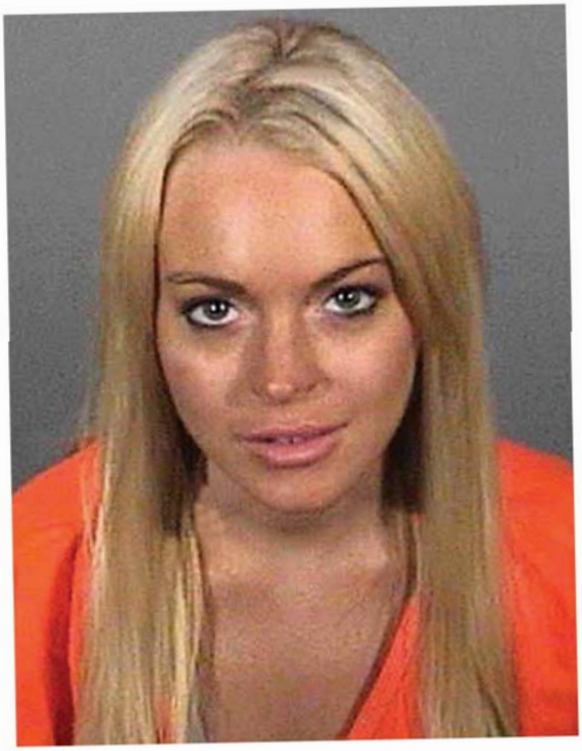
Necessary extravagance...
Citrus Verbena Shower Gel from L'Occitane, which I've since traded for protection.

Looking forward to...
Take a wild [expletive] guess.

Dreaming of...
an escape plan. Like, if I start digging a hole in my wall, right behind this poster of Rita Hayworth, I should make it out to freedom in maybe a month or two.

Listening to...
my cell mate yapping about how I snore, take up all the sink space with my beauty products, and make ridiculous comparisons between our cell and my suite at the Carlton Hotel in Cannes. There is no comparison. Really.

Dropping by...
the prison library and hoping they updated their collection. They had an issue of 'People' with me on the cover—from when I did 'The Parent Trap.'



Wishing for...
Rachel McAdams's next movie to flop.

Driving...
the prison laundry cart—that is, until I ran it over another inmate who said that movie I did about the death of Robert Kennedy stunk. But I swear it was an accident.

Carrying...
a shiv I fashioned out of a plastic spork—you know, for nail filing and things like that. Except this one time some byotch tripped and her neck landed on it just right. But hey, now I got my iPhone back.

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